Thursday, March 5, 2009 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 24 / No. 87 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

**DFA: Orly Mercado** to be named permanent envoy to Asean **NEWS** / A3

**House retreats** on right of reply bill **NEWS** / A2

**Joey de Leon describes** the perfect comic **ENTERTAINMENT** / D1

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED P... VIEWS

## Counting stopped on 10,048th day

By Marlon Ramos and Philip C. Tubeza

FOR THE PAST 26 YEARS, ERNESTO Mateo had been counting the days since he and his fellow soldiers were thrown in jail for the 1983 killings of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. and his framed up gunman, Rolando Galman.

Yesterday, Mateo was almost in disbelief when he realized the time had come to stop counting.

"It's been 10,048 days since we were jailed for the crime we did not commit. I'm very happy because I'm still alive to breathe the air outside

COUNTING A8

## Who's the 'Joker' in Ninoy's murder?

By Francisco I. Chavez

*(The author, a former solicitor general, was active in the prosecution moves against the Marcos dictatorship.)*

**COMMENTARY**

IT COMES AS A DISTURBING irony that one full week after the 23rd anniversary of the People Power Revolution on Feb. 25, the last batch of murder convicts in the Aquino-Galman slay was released.

No less disturbing is the fact that the real mastermind behind the killing of ex-Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino on that fateful day of Aug. 21, 1983, remains unidentified, unindicted and unprosecuted.

It certainly speaks volumes of the sordid state of the Philippine justice system that the true author or authors of that grisly crime have remained scot-free and,

WHO'S THE JOKER A6

**AUG. 21, 1983** Former Sen. Ninoy Aquino lies in a crucifixal sealed in his coat closed on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport which is now named after him. Not far from where Aquino fell was his framed-up assassin, Rolando Galman. He, too, had been shot dead. There were 37 originally accused in the Aquino-Galman murders; 16 were found guilty and sentenced to double life terms in 1990; the Supreme Court affirmed. REUTERS FILE

# GMA frees Ninoy killers

**AND THEN THERE WERE NONE** The last 10 convicts in the Aquino-Galman double murder case are filing out of the National Prison in Muntinlupa. Ex-Sgt. Claro Lat, one of 5 soldiers, who boarded Aquino's plane to escort him, leads the caravan here out of jail.

## Kris aghast: I wish they'd stop lying

By Inquirer staff

NO COMMENT.

Former President Corazon Aquino, who is stricken with cancer and rarely makes a public appearance, declined to comment on Malacañang's decision to pardon the last 10 remaining soldiers who were convicted of the murder of her husband, former Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr.

The widow kept her silence as the New Bilibid Prisons yesterday emptied its cells of soldiers found guilty of assassinating the foremost opposition leader during the ferdinand Marcos dictatorship.

Aquino also instructed her son, Sen. Noynoy Aquino, not to talk about the executive clemency granted by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

But the senator nevertheless spoke to reporters, accusing Ms Arroyo of "abuse of discretion."

"Society has an obligation to transmit a message that if you commit a crime, you must pay for it," the younger Aquino said. "They haven't owed up to their sin. Why were they freed when they have yet to ask for forgiveness."

His younger sister Kris was also aghast.

"I wanted to keep my silence but I was really bothered by the narrative of the soldiers. It's just as sad that they can rewrite history," she said.

"It particularly hurt me that they can also

DMB FREES A6

## Mancao to bare brains in Dacer, Corbito murders

By Erika Sauler and Christine O. Avendaño

A FORMER POLICE OFFICER DAGGED IN the abduction and killing of a publicist and his driver in 2000 has signed an affidavit identifying the perpetrators and the mastermind, the lawyer of one of the victims said yesterday.

Demetrio Custodio, legal counsel of the family of the slain publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer, said ex-Senior Supt. Cesar Mancao II had spoken with Dacer's daughter Karina during an extradition hearing in Florida in the United States and offered an apology.

"Pinatuyan na po siyan," Custodio quoted Mancao as saying.

Custodio refused to name names because of a double-murder case pending at the

MANCAO A9

## Gays, lesbians hear Mass at Baguio City bar

By Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—IT WAS A SUNDAY MASS no different from what mainstream churches hold, except that the faithful, including the officiating minister, are gays and lesbians.

About 20 people gathered at a bar here one Sunday afternoon in February to attend the landmark religious service dedicated to gays and lesbians, many of whom had complained of discrimination in their churches.

GAYS, LESBIANS A9

## MVP buys into Meralco; board war seen

By Doris C. Dumlao and Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacasa

THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED BOARDroom rag-of-war between San Miguel Corp. and the Lopez family took a new twist yesterday as a group led by Manuel V. Pangilinan obtained a foothold in the country's largest power distributor, Manila Electric Co.

Some 24 million Meralco shares worth about P2.2 billion were crossed in two block transactions at the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday and brokered by First Metro Securities Brokerage, according to stock market sources *(Related story on Page A8.)*

The sources confirmed that the shares were gobbled up by Pangilinan's group.

Given the group's buying spree since last week at P95.50 per share, Pangilinan's group has gained control of about 6 percent of Meralco's outstanding stock, another stock market source said.

Some of the sellers included units affiliated with the Lopez family such as Meralco Pension Fund, suggesting

MVP BUYS A8

## Calabarzon hardest-hit by global crisis

By Jerome Aning

MORE THAN 40,000 WORKERS HAVE lost their jobs in the country since the onset of the global financial crisis in October last year, Labor Secretary Marianito Roque said yesterday.

Roque said more than half of the 40,191 workers laid off came from the Calabarzon region, where economic zones hosting companies engaged in manufacturing and export are located.

"The export industry in the economy is the hardest hit because of the slump in demand," he said at a press briefing.

Other big groups of dismissed workers are those from the garments and

CALABARZON A6

## UK university offers postgrad course on the Beatles

LONDON—THE CITY ALREADY HAS a Beatles museum and a Beatles-themed hotel. Its airport is even named after John Lennon. Now a Liverpool university says it is rolling out a graduate program entirely devoted to the Fab Four.

Liverpool Hope University on Tuesday said that its new master's program, "The Beatles, Popular Music and Society," would give students the op-

UK UNIVERSITY A6

## Pac-Man shows way to clean Pasig River

By Fernando del Mundo

*(Fourth of a series)*

**Getting green in Japan**
**SPECIAL REPORT**

TOKYO—PAC-MAN has been set loose to allow marine life to thrive in Tokyo Bay.

That's in the 13 facilities in the Japanese capital, where 92 computer-

Some construct pumping stations divert rainfall and wastewater from households and factories for treatment using chemicals and microorganisms that work like the popular video game icons.

Sewers constructed from concrete, polyvinyl chloride and steel pipes with diameters ranging from 25 centimeters to 8.5 meters and running for 15,000 kilometers deep in the bowels of the metropolis are the essential nerves of the water treatment centers.

The facilities comprise the centerpiece of the metropolitan government's program to maintain ecological balance

PAC-MAN A6

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

2D SUBTITLES
12 8 15 3 9 4 5
4D
2 4 6
FOUR DIGIT
5 2 6 3 6 9 8
MEGALOTTO 6/45
12 16 18 21 34 38
P12,766,510.80

# Merci: I'm not going to quit

## House retreats on right of reply bill

By Gil Cabacungan Jr and Leila Salaverria

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS signaled retreat on the controversial right of reply bill, sending it back to the committee level for further review following "hook of protests from the media sector.

House Majority Leader Arthur Defensor said the right of reply bill has been referred back to the committee on public information and its principal authors told by House Speaker Prospero Nograles ordered to "revisit" it and make it more palatable to all sectors, including media.

Defensor, speaking at the days and days breakfast forum, said senior leaders from representatives as well as other sectors will likely be introduced again.

Media groups are protesting the bill, which would compel them to print or air the reply of anyone who feels slighted by criticism in media in the same space and with the same prominence within three days. Media points out that the Constitution forbids Congress from passing any law that would abridge freedom of speech and of the press.

### Also deferred

In a related development, however, Congress also held back its approval of a bill that would decriminalize libel, a bill popular with some media groups.

Nograles ordered the postponement of the third and final reading of the House Bill 5760, which purportedly reduces penalties for journalists.

In a statement, Nograles said he ordered the deferment of the deliberations of libel bill in order to allow the lawmakers to review it. He admitted that the interest of the bill was lost in the substitute bill sent to the floor.

"I think that the provisions which are supposed to remove the imprisonment clause in the measure did not see print," he said.

Pimentel, in a statement late last year, insisted the decriminalization of libel bill is something that must "stand in hand" with the passage of the right of reply bill.

In a National Press Club forum yesterday, Pascual said the right of reply bill would "possibly include a provision of immunity from libel if the media organization has complied with the publication or airing of the aggrieved person's side."

Pimentel yesterday also said he would propose the insertion of such a provision when the measure is tackled in the bicameral conference committee.

With a report from Rylee Basilio

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and TJ Burgonio

MAINTAINING THAT she had done nothing wrong, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez yesterday refused to heed calls for her to resign or go on leave in the face of an impeachment complaint brought against her by civil society leaders led by former Senate President Jovito Salonga.

"I am not going to resign. I am not taking a leave of absence despite calls for presidential succession," Gutierrez said in a press statement.

She said she was doing her job, dispelled allegations that she has been sitting on corruption cases, and said she was ready to face the impeachment complaint which she described as "baseless."

Gutierrez claimed solid support from Office of the Ombudsman employees who came out with a manifesto in her support within hours of the complaint being filed last Monday.

"The support by the majority of the employees and officials of the Office of the Ombudsman," said Assistant Ombudsman Mark Jeliendrel.

He said Gutierrez should not go on leave as "that will not help the Office of the Ombudsman."

### Good option

But Special Prosecutor Jessie Dellosantos, who has been at odds with Gutierrez, said she should "consider the mounting calls for her to resign" to preserve the credibility of the office.

He said that if the complaint is found to be valid to form and substance, "it might be a good option to consider taking a leave of absence."

Dellosantos' party-list member Rafael Mariano yesterday said that President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, defense of Gutierrez was a "war" by administration House members to kill the impeachment complaint.

Arroyo had solid followings and the 59 signatories to the impeachment complaint to leave Gutierrez alone and pointed the Ombudsman for "performing her duties well."

Akbayan party-list member Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel said Arroyo's statement betrayed the "dangerous political liaison" between Arroyo and Gutierrez and further showed up the view that the Ombudsman was not independent and impartial.

GUTIERREZ

### Defending Mike

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita defended Arroyo, saying he was just citing an opinion about Gutierrez.

"The First Gentleman is a private individual. It's within his right to take a position on matters of first nature," he said.

Undersecretary Anthony Golez, the deputy presidential spokesperson, noted that the personalities who filed impeachment complaint against the President in the past and those seeking to impeach Gutierrez were the same.

"It looks like they have the same motive. They are just a nuisance to the work of every institution," he said.

Ermita ruled out suggestions that the President issue a statement on the Gutierrez impeachment complaint.

"The Ombudsman is a separate constitutional body. It's not proper for a head of government to take a position, one way or the other," he said.

### No need to take leave

In a forum, Majority leader Arthur Defensor said the cudgel that the House committee on justice can act on the Salonga complaint was only month when Congress returns from its Lenten break. The complaint would need to win a one-third vote in the House to push the impeachment moves to the Senate.

Defensor said there was no need for Gutierrez to take a leave of absence in the meantime.

Both sides, some 29 members of complainants and the Ombudsman's coalition group held a rally in front of the Office of the Ombudsman to denounce Gutierrez's alleged inaction on some concerns.

With reports from Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

## AIG keeps Philamlife

By Doris C. Dumlao

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL Group (AIG) yesterday officially announced its decision to spin off its local crown jewel, Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co. (Philam-life), into an independently operating Asian unit which is not affected by sale.

The Asian unit, which will become Philamlife's new parent company, is American International Assurance Company, Ltd (AIA). AIG earlier attempted to list out Philamlife as part of the divestment of the assets of its parent company American Life Insurance Company (ALICO).

AIA officially announced that Philamlife would now be removed and made part of the AIA group. It added it saw "opportunities at this time" to include Philamlife to the new AIA structure as the rest of AIA was being separated from AIG and positioned as an independent operation.

AIA president Mark Wilson said: "The Philippines is a very important part of the AIA Asian leadership. We are confident that there will be benefits for Philamlife's customers, employees and agents from being fully integrated into Asia's leading insurance company."

Philamlife president Jose L. Cuisia Jr. for his part, said: "Philamlife is and has historically been a strong business. It is a leading life insurer in the Philippines with the widest network of offices, largest number of agents and most extensive portfolio of products and services.

# Rejected by CA, Orly gets new job

By Christine Avendaño

MALACAÑANG MAY SAVE INTERIOR SYCIP nomination of Orlando Mercado as ambassador to China but but it has appointed the former senator to a new job, one that may again require him to face the powerful congressional Commission on Appointments.

According to Sen. Ruggy Ermita, whose objection to Mercado's ambassadorial appointment was instrumental in his being bypassed twice by the CA, Malacañang has nominated Mercado as the country's Permanent Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Ermita said opposition to Mercado's appointment was not personal.

Ermita would support his son was not happy with Mercado's new appointment and vowed to block the nomination if Mercado has the audacity to have to face the CA again.

Ermita, who is Senate President Pro Tempore, has made it his mission to frustrate Mercado at every turn, moving motion in the nomination that he still had many questions about Mercado's nomination, effectively blocking approval of the appointment. Opposition to a nominee from just one CA member is enough to block an appointment.

**Edsa II player**

Mercado served as defense secretary to Estrada before the unelected president was Ousted by President Joseph Estrada. He was one of the first Estrada Cabinet members to withdraw support from the disgraced leader during the second Edsa uprising that brought President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to power.

Yesterday the younger Estrada said he believed Mercado's new appointment would give him the means of accommodate. He stated that Mercado would never be able to get through the CA as he would block the nomination.

A foreign affairs official said however that Mercado's new job was that of a "special envoy" and would not require CA approval.

The official, who did not want to be identified, said the position was a newly created office that was agreed on by the 10 Asean leaders early last year. It is the first time that the Philippines will be naming a representative to Asean, the official said.

**Co-terminus**

"Strictly speaking, [Mercado] is not an ambassador and he is not required to go to the CA," the official said.

Mercado's new position will be co-terminus with the President's but the official said this does not preclude the President's appointing a successor even before her term ends in June 2010.

Also yesterday, Estrada successfully blocked the promotion of Brig. Gen. Jonathan Macky to major general.

Estrada told the committee that he wanted to question Macky on why a section 2nd Lt. Raymundo was dismissed for obliterating conjugal class of his father.

But he said he was "still not ready to question" Macky yesterday. The general was then deemed bypassed by the CA.

# Ping lets general through CA wringer

By Christine D. Avendaño

AFTER OFFICIALLY getting his three stars yesterday, Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit, whose name is being touted as the next Armed Forces chief of staff, went to thank the man who had the power to block his promotion.

"I told them to [let Panfilo Lacson] ... he deserved that respect from me and he was gentleman enough to acknowledge my thanks," Bangit said, apparently alluding to the promotion to a three-star general was confirmed by the Commission on Appointments.

A lone objection in the powerful CA is enough to let one senator's appointment or promotion.

Bangit was among 14 officers whose promotions were confirmed at yesterday's CA plenary the last day before Congress takes a month-long break.

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Application forms are available at all GSIS offices nationwide, and are also downloadable from www.gsis.gov.ph. Application period is from February 9 to April 14, 2009. The electronic raffle draw is on April 17, 2009.

For more information, please call Emma, Amie, or Jesse at 9764970 or visit www.gsis.gov.ph.

GSIS




## PAF gets 15 used planes from Korea

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN decades, the Philippine Air Force will have a large number of aircraft in its training fleet, thanks to a recent bequest from the government of South Korea.

Fifteen refurbished T-34B trainer planes sailed for multiyear flyby "maiden flight" today from Pampanga to Batangas.

The 15 planes were recently given by Seoul to the Philippines as "tokens of friendship" to fill the gap in the training of PAF pilots, said Air Force spokesperson Maj. Diosdado Zamudio Jr.

According to Zamudio, this is the first time to move from two decades that the Air Force lost a huge number of aircraft "all at the same time."

The last time the country received that large a number of aircraft was in the 1980s, he said.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. and PAF chief Lt. Gen. Oscar Rebesa will receive the aircraft in massive ceremonies at the Clark Air Base, Pampanga today.

Teodoro and Rebesa, both serviced pilots, will then lead other PAF pilots in a mock flight-in-V formation from the Base Air Base in Floridablanca, Pampanga to the Fernando Air Base in Lipa, Batangas.

The 15 planes will boost the PAF's Undo aviation training program for students from the Philippine Military Academy, originally scheduled to commence in backlog, said Zamudio.

Before the South Korean donation, the PAF had only eight trainer planes fit to fly, said Zamudio.

# Slaughter of pigs completed tomorrow

By Ryn T. Olchondra and Carmela Reyes and Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

THE CULLING OF 6,000 HOGS ordered over the Hong Kong strain in a Bulacan farm may be completed on Friday as workers have recovered from the early setbacks, said Bureau of Animal Industry Director Dantes Carbaugan.

The culling, which began last Tuesday, has been hampered by delays caused by malfunctioning equipment and inclement weather.

Carbaugan said that 1,436 hogs were culled on Tuesday night, an improvement from the 795 culled on Monday and 442 on Sunday. The initial target was to exterminate about 1,000 hogs each day.

"The total now in three days is 2,661 [hogs]. About half[way] there on March 14 or 15.

He said the budget department was still putting every section of the General Appropriations Act passed last month by the Senate and the House of Representatives. It would later recommend to the President which items she should keep or cut, he added.

Enrile said the amounts could be gleaned from the list of departments that receive the highest percentage of increases in the national budget.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, for example, stands to receive the highest percentage adjustment among all agencies, with a 110-percent increase. From a P4.096-billion budget, the amount will increase to P8.170 billion.

On the other hand, the Department of Agriculture, which has a P70.1-billion budget, or a 46.4-percent increase, while the Department of Public Works and Highways will get P1.271 billion, or a 34.3-percent raise.

## GMA to sign P1.4-trillion budget soon

By Christine F. Esguerra

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-AR-oyo is expected to sign in 10 days the year's P1.415-trillion national budget containing the bulk of her administration's economic stimulus package intended to ride out the global financial crisis that has rocked local shores.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday said the Department of Budget and Management would submit the budget for Mr Arroyo's approval si-

## UST Artlets homecoming

THE UST ARTS AND LETTERS ALUMNI Association and All Batch '84 will host "Quote, Blue, Moving Through", a grand alumni homecoming, on Saturday to celebrate the Sapphire (or 25th Anniversary) of the Faculty of Arts and Letters.

The homecoming will be held at the Plaza Mayor in front of the UST Main Building. Registration starts at 3 p.m., followed by a Mass and fellowship.

The event is sponsored by Skynet Travel Corp., Nicolas Pitch, Hospital, Vilar Enterprises, Grupalito, DDF Service Corp., Eva Air, Amadeus, Hobs, United Auctioneers, Inc., Gotesolo, Union Bank and Inquirer Bell.

Silver sponsors are Cebu Airlines, Red Ginger Inc., Hongkong Export Airlines, Northwest Airlines, Nestle Pitts, Gore, Dockers and Amoria Plaza Hotel.

For registration, call Quezon Area: 09228213444 / 09189099118, Baby Garalde 09214425690; Diac Pitch 09228878876 / 09187836952.


THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, March 5, 2009
1st Week of Lent
1st Reading: Jonah 3:1-10; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19
Gospel: Mt 7:7-12

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Would any of you give a stone to your son when he asks for bread? Or give him a snake, when he asks for a fish? As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

"So, do to others whatever you would like others do to you; these you have the Law and the Prophets."

Commentary

Prayer is the appointed means for obtaining what we need. But what we need, what we should ask for, may surprise us. Jesus says that God would not give a stone to a child who asks for bread, or a snake when asked for a fish. Jesus, you know, makes a business of giving us what we need and not what we think we want. Ask, as a beggar asks the way. Seek, as the owner of what was lost has lost. Knock, as one who has locked the door against us, by prayer we knock. By knock at the door, just as your friend when you want to enter their house.

Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, shall be given to you if God sees that you need it. This applies to all who pray with right way. Everyone who asks and receives, in that sense, all, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or illiterate. Whoever persists and is foolishly importunate, shall, in all sense, the house whose need motivates is right for us. Our prayer should also be a way of thanking God for all that we have received.

Old and Contemporary Meditation: Ps 3 Martyrs St. Of Filipe, Olimpia, Quirino City, DPO, Ave a Filipino Lord Quezon Ave. No. 1002 Tel. 10-0000, Tel. No. (02) 733-03-09. E-mail: publications.org/Subscribe: http://www.dailygospel.org/subscribe Questions/Publications: E-mail: dailygospel.org/subscribe Manuscript to: Fr. Philip Gregory OFM, QUEZON, Quezon Philippines. E-mail: [illegible]

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* Maliban sa mga nakalaang gamot sa problema/pagbara sa prostate, ang mga gamot na ito ay pwede ring gamitin ng mga babae at bata. Sumangguni sa inyong doktor para malaman.

# MVP backs Lopezes vs SMC in Meralco

By Dante L. Lucas

HOUSEKEEPING: Manuel V. Pangilinan has agreed to back the Lopez family's bid to retain control of Manila Electric Co. as part of the deal that saw his group's entry into the country's largest electricity distributor.

This was revealed by an industry source yesterday amid lingering questions on which side—the Lopezes family or the Ramon Ang-led San Miguel Corp.—he would back at Meralco's annual stockholders' meeting in May.

"MVP (Pangilinan's initials) has promised to support the Lopezes," said the source, who asked not to be named because his company is involved in other deals with Pangilinan.

### Playing coy

Pangilinan yesterday played coy when asked by reporters about the entry of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. into Meralco, which an initial acquisition last week of the 3-percent stake originally owned by the power distribution's retirement fund.

"There are no disclosures required," said Pangilinan, who is also the managing director of First Pacific, the holding firm controlled by the Salim family of Indonesia. "Maybe no comment (Nono yet)."

He said, however, that his group was seeking to "raise the shareholder value" of any company it would invest in.

"We would like to work with existing shareholders, the existing board and the existing management," said Pangilinan, chair of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), stressing that he was speaking in general terms, rather than in reference to Meralco.

The telecommunications giant has an existing relationship with Meralco on an operational level, where some of the former's telephone cables are laid along the electric poles of the latter, he pointed out.

"Obviously, synergies, there are synergies," he said. "And they (Meralco) have a significant fiber optic (network) in Greater Metro Manila."

Despite this, however, several market observers maintained that Pangilinan's interest in Meralco did not in any way mean increasing the position of the Lopez family against a potentially hostile San Miguel takeover.

One source said Pangilinan earlier expressed interest in the 25-percent block of Meralco shares that were recently acquired by San Miguel from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) last year.

### Superior bid

Pangilinan reportedly offered a superior bid—but the GSIS balked, payable in cash, compared with that of San Miguel, which will pay P90 per share for the GSIS stake, staggered over a three-year period.

"Despite that, the risks still seem to favor Miguel," the source pointed out, repeating market speculation that San Miguel and Pangilinan had hammered out a "freeze-thrush" ahead of the deal—something dog has denied.

At present, San Miguel holds the upper hand on the Meralco board, with the diversifying group already having seven seats and holding a combined 39-percent stake in the firm, after it acquired a further 11 percent from other government financial institutions last year.

In contrast, the Lopez family, which currently controls Meralco, only holds 31 percent of the outstanding shares of stock.

### Access to 20%

Pangilinan has reportedly been offered access to "close to 26 percent" of Meralco's shares in the Lopez family trust (via the COH) stake

# Joe de V vows to prove GMA payoffs to solons

By Leila B. Salaverria

FORMER SPEAKER Joe De Venecia is standing pat on his allegation that Philippine Marsagaysay Incorporated not money or some concessions to push a bogus impeachment complaint against her in 2007.

In his formal reply to the complaint of Agusan del Norte Rep. Edelwina Rosales seeking his expulsion from the House of Representatives, De Venecia said that he can prove his allegations.

But he said the ethics complaint against him should be dismissed because that would be "convenience to dooming the messenger."

Rosales had sought De Venecia's expulsion for saying during the House's brief consideration of the impeachment case against the presidential that "everybody is for sale in this country."

De Venecia had alleged that some Congressmen and local officials received bribes of up to P500,000 on Dec. 11, 2007.

In "Venecia argued that members of the House could only be sanctioned for disorderly behavior, as stated in the 1987 Constitution and that his statements during the impeachment hearing could not be regarded as disorderly behavior.

According to him, he never said, and is not saying now that all members of the House could be bought.

# GMA frees Ninoy killers

From page A1

Manuel Jr. (especially the soldier who said that all he wanted was to help get my dad to the hospital when all photos showed that my dad was handled worse than a slaughtered animal. They already have their freedom. How I wish I hey could sing/sing," Ito said.

Senator Aquino said that freeing the surviving soldiers did not put a closure to the controversial murder case.

He said that it would possibly come if Felipe Alfredo, who is now living in the United States, would finally "spill the beans."

Valerio was the group commander of the Aviation Security Command (Avscom) 80th Special Operations Squadron, the military unit that fetched Aquino in from the aircraft upon its landing at the Manila International Airport.

The senator said there were also pleas by some people to publish their knowledge of the murder conspiracy, especially after the 26-year prescription period for the murder crime expired in 2003.

KIKO AQUINO: Just to say.

### Falling out

Cory Aquino and Ms Arroyo had a falling out following disclosures in the "Hello Garci" wiretaps purportedly showing that Ms Arroyo made the 2004 presidential election a charge she has denied. Cory Aquino has rallied on Ms Arroyo to step down.

### 'They've suffered enough'

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that Ms Arroyo's grant of clemency was prompted by her sympathy from religious and civil society groups.

"They feel that these people have suffered enough. This was justified for humanitarian reasons. They're suffering different kinds of ailments."

Ermita said he hoped the release of the soldiers would put a closure to the case.

Ermita said Ms Arroyo did not order the release of the soldiers, including Constabulary deputy Marine, identified during the court hearings as the trigger person, or "sipto" Cory Aquino.

The said Bishop Bienvenido Tendero of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches was one of those who interceded on behalf of the convicts.

Archbishops Angel Lagdameo and Oscar Cruz said that the soldiers had suffered enough.

"We don't have to delay their release further if it was convinced that they were the real culprits," said Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

Tañada, secretary-general of the Free Ninoy Movement, charged that the release was done in violation of the Philippine Constitution, which prohibits the granting of executive clemency to those who were convicted of heinous crimes.

Tañada said the soldiers were not qualified for executive clemency because they were convicted of heinous crimes.

"The Constitution is very clear. It is very certain who killed whom, that is why the responsibility fell on the group of persons who carried pull the trigger," he said.

### God bless them

"They have suffered enough and they behaved well, so God bless them," Cruz said.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan said that the "sad reality about all this is that only the small fry have been made to suffer."

"Still the masterminds are known and punished for their dastardly deed, we still seem have closure to this brutal murder case."

But the question lingers: Did they kill Ninoy Aquino? And who was the mastermind?

Nine of the 16 soldiers convicted of the murder were acquitted during Aquino on Aug. 21, 1983, as he stepped off a China Airlines jetliner on his return from three years of self-exile in the United States.

Instead, they stuck to the original version of the shooting that Marcos declared after the assassination: that communist hit man Rolando Galman killed Aquino before Galman himself was shot by soldiers.

Six other convicts had either died in jail or were freed earlier, including two generals and a colonel.

The mastermind of Ninoy's murder has never been established, but his widow has always held that Marcos was responsible for the slaying of her husband, a likely presidential contender until he was jailed after martial law was declared in 1972.

### Single shot

Nine had been freed in 1988 and allowed to undergo a heart bypass operation in the United States. He had cause heart disease years later locally due supposedly to torture. Another, despite close monitorings that he would be killed upon his return.

The single shot fired to the back of the head of Ninoy on that sultry Sunday afternoon erased the notion from the absence of the Marcos regime and catapulted the widow to the Presidency following the People Power Revolution three years later that ousted Marcos. With reports from Germelina Bondoc, Michael Lim Ubac, TJ Burgonio and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

# WHAT WENT BEFORE

## *The accused, the convicted in double murders on tarmac*

ON AUG. 21, 1983, 300 months after slightly from the Chinese Airlines jetliner that brought him back to the Philippines after a three-year exile in the United States, opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. was gunned down on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport.

Also killed was Rolando Galman, who the military claimed had been hired by communists to assassinate the rival of then President Ferdinand Marcos.

Three days after the killings, Marcos formed a fact-finding commission headed by Chief Justice Enrique Fernando to investigate the murders. Six months, who had close ties with the Marcos, later resigned over questions about his impartiality.

Marcos created another fact-finding commission on Oct. 14, 1985, with former Court of Appeals Justice Corazon Agrava as head.

On Oct. 22, 1984, the commission, with the exception of Agrava, released a report saying that military officers, including then Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Fabian Ver, had conspired to kill Aquino. The report also concluded that the military had framed Galman as Aquino's assassin.

Agrava issued a separate report that recommended the filing of charges against seven ex-military men. She did not include Ver in the recommendation, saying he was not part of the assassination plot.

### All accused acquitted

The Supreme Court assigned the case to the Sandiganbayan, which acquitted all the accused on Dec. 2, 1985.

On Sept. 12, 1986, seven months after Aquino's widow Corazon was sworn in the presidency in the aftermath of the People Power Revolution that ousted Marcos in February, the Supreme Court ordered a retrial of the Aquino-Galman case.

Then Sandiganbayan Raul Gonzalez filed murder charges against 37 military men, including Ver who had fled the country with the Marcoses, three civilians and several John Does.

### 16 found guilty

On Sept. 26, 1990, the Sandiganbayan found 16 of the accused guilty of the killings and sentenced them to double life imprisonment. However, no exonerated was named.

Convicted were alleged gunman — Constable Rogelio Moreno, Sta. Cruz, Lucban (Tayabas), Capt. Romeo Hontiveros, 2nd Lt. Jesus Castaño, CIC Claudio Lasaga, AIC Cecilio Rinolo, AIC Alfredo Tesoro, 30/Sgt. Delfin Hacienda, and Sergeant Claro Luz, Arturdo de Jesus, Sgt. Hermilando Mallari, Sgt. Jose Ouirimit, Ernesto Mateo, Rodolfo Desiderio, Ruben Aquino and Arnaldo Antares.

Acquitted were Maj. Gen. Prospero Olivas, Colonels Artemio Custodio and Pantaleon Tigas Jr., Capt. Demetlyn Reviera, AIC Alejandro Bolinao, AIC Joseph Quitlong, AIC Antonio Acopiado, Sergeants Armando de la Cruz, Pompeyo Diaz, Reynaldo Delos, Eugenio Calibosa, Claudio Bacuno, Clemencio Lista, Ronnie Fernandez, Oscar Palmeras, Juan Gumabo, and Pedro Tera, and civilians Jose Argovan, Jesus Singson and Hermilo Gonzalez.

Capt. Felipe Valerio and former Marcos propaganda chief Gregorio Cendaña could not be found at the time and were thus not arraigned.

Cendaña returned to the country from the US in 1991 and posted a P40,000 bail at the Sandiganbayan. He died in 2006.

Ver succumbed in a lung ailment in Thailand in 1998. Accused Sgt. Leonardo Mejia died while the case was being tried.

### SC affirms conviction

On July 22, 1991, the Supreme Court affirmed the conviction.

Through the years, the number of those serving their sentence dwindled because of parole and executive pardon.

Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio, who was afflicted with liver cancer while undergoing trial, died some after the verdict was handed down. Custodio was scheduled to death row in April 1995, while Lasaga died in 2008 after suffering a stroke.

In 2007, President Arroyo granted 36/Sgt. Pablo Martinez conditional pardon because of his advanced age and good behavior.

In February, Tanse and Dr. Gregorio, whose sentences were commuted by former President Fidel V. Ramos and President Arroyo respectively, completed their prison terms and were released. — Inquirer Research

# Counting stopped on 10,048th day after 18 years in jail

From page A1

the prison," Manes told the Inquirer. "The Lord answered my prayers."

Manes, along with Rogelio Moreno, Ruben Aquino, Arnulfo Artantes, Romeo Hinolan, Jesus Cando, Arnulfo de Mesa, Rodolfo Desalang, Claro Luz and Filoteneo Miranda, walked out of the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City at 9:00 a.m.

Escorted by prison guards and staff of the Public Attorney's Office, the group left the prison compound at 1:18 p.m. to the arms of their relatives who had waited for them as early as 7 a.m.

As soon as they received their official discharge papers, the 10 excitedly rush off their scraps prison shirts.

### Overwhelmed

"At last," De Mesa, 49, exclaimed, shedding a white cotton tape containing P200 for travel fare.

"Words cannot express what I'm feeling. I still would not believe that my husband is finally free," Artantes' wife Arcelyn said, crying.

Overwhelmed by emotion, each of the 10 former soldiers recalled the troubles that they and their families had to go through.

Luz was abandoned by his wife shortly after his arrest.

De Mesa, now afflicted with diabetes, never had the chance to have his own family. He was only 23 when arrested.

Dandoning, who is suffering from an acute kidney ailment, failed to attend the weddings of his three children.

Most of them also had lost their parents and siblings.

"It's hard to lose a loved one while you are in prison. You cannot be sure all your emotions. That's why I'm planning to visit the graves of my father and brother when I get home," Dandoning said.

### Innocent

All insisted they were innocent of the charges against them.

"How can we admit something which we did not have knowledge of?" Manes said.

"What we planned then was actually the best security plan to protect Ninoy Aquino," Dandoning said.

They urged former President Corazon Aquino to push for the reopening of the case.

"If we are really after the truth, then we must do everything to ensure that we find out who were really responsible for the death of Ninoy," Manes said.

### Martinez's confession

Asked who the mastermind was, some pointed to a confession of Sgt. Pablo Martinez, who was released in 2007 and who linked businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco to the killing.

"Source Martinez is pointing to Danding Cojuangco," Luz said. "We don't know anything about that."

"We also want to know what happened because the Filipino people also still don't know who was behind the killing. It's still a puzzle," Artantes said.

Ilustrious, who was the group officer in charge during the killings, said Martinez had confessed to them in 1991 but refused to name all the murders.

"I believe that what he said was true because he's now a born-again Christian. He's really changed. He was crying to them of us when he confessed," Ilustrious said.

### Plea forgiveness

"He asked for forgiveness and told us everything that happened. It was only at that time that I realized what had happened," Ilustrious said.

But when asked if he believed Martinez, Ilustrious said: "I don't know because Martinez should answer that. I don't know anything about that."

The soldiers thanked Cory Aquino for vindicating their due had proclaimed them.

"I hope Madame President Aquino continues in her images. I include her in my daily prayers and I also feel what she is feeling because I have a history of," said Artantes, who is not having been more exiled before.

### There's no one

He said the Aquino children might still have ill will but pleaded for understanding.

"My life inside the Bilibid was so hard all those years that if one of us was the killer, I would have already pointed him out," he said. "But there's no one."

# *Who's the Joker in Ninoy's murder?*

From page A1

worse, have been allowed to reassume political, social and economic relevance.

The convicted soldiers were as much victims as the family of Ninoy Aquino. They may be telling the truth that they were actually there to prevent Ninoy from a real threat posed by a gunman who wrestled unidentified Indian Chinese Airlines' Flight No 811 trade in Read document at the time Manila International Airport.

Clueless as to the identity of the person wielding the murderous strings, each soldier dutifully carried out the individual task assigned to him, with no idea of what crimes were given to the rest of the team.

It was a clear case of compartmentalization to ensure leaves that will shield the masterminds.

### Only one standing

Imagine that opening sequence in "The Dark Knight."

The robbers, their visages covered with clown masks, pull off a daring heist in a bank known to house the deposits of opposed gangsters in Gotham City.

Each robber is under instruction to kill the other robber once that other robber has done his bit of the crime, ostensibly to silence any eyewitness in particular of the loot.

The instructions are carried out by each robber in methodical fashion until, at the very end, only one is left standing—the Joker himself, laughing his way out of the bank.

In the Alejandro Galman case, who is the Joker?

Who mentioned the unknown route that ferried Ninoy from the Legaspi International Airport in Boston in Los Angeles, Malaysia, Hong Kong and, finally, Taipei?

The intending crime may have been employed precisely to throw off the persons who were seriously wanting, with dark plans, Ninoy's return from exile abroad.

Who was the Joker who handpicked the persons to man the airport facilities and the runway that day?

Who was the Joker who chose which soldiers were to board the plane to collect Ninoy?

Who was the Joker who selected Rolando Galman to act as the assassin's fall guy to the bloody masquerade?

### Usual suspects

The sad thing is, there may not be only one Joker, but two or more.

And they remain incognito because the actual participants in the crime (the 16 soldiers convicted by the Sandiganbayan in September 1990, had been so "compartmentalized" that each of them could only speak of the instructions relayed by Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio, their highest commanding officer.

And Custodio, then the chief of the Aviation Security Command, died while serving sentence.

Those who remain outraged by the "Crime of the Century" have their "usual suspects."

Some claim that the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos had the last motive to have Ninoy killed. (I read an article in the Inquirer saying that Mikhail Meyer Ann Ninoy was surprised to find a portrait of Ninoy in the dictator's bedroom next after the fella crossed over the gates of Malacañang.)

Others point to a relative of Ninoy himself. Many think it was the then Armed Forces chief of staff. Some think it was the dictator's widow.

Others offer the scenario that it was the communists who commissioned Ninoy's killing, in order to eradicate any burgeoning protest movements against the Marcos administration at that time. (This is a proposition that could have achieved a semblance of credibility had it not been immensely difficult to believe that a few communist cadres were easily penetrated a formidable security web thrown around the Manila International Airport.)

The most intriguing suggestion is that this individual, or individuals, may have acted on their own as the dictator was too sick to make important decisions.

### Sad spectacle

And that is how and the Aquino-Galman double-murder case has come to be. It has degenerated into a spectacle of amateurs, speculators and outpositions born by the absence of proof that would link the real masterminds to the crime.

The irony is not lost even on Cory Aquino, who was not able to unmask the author of her husband's murder during her term as President.

Had our police investigators done their job to get to the bottom of the case, had our state prosecutors carried out their task to indict all those who were responsible for the murder, regardless of who they are, had our magistrates at the Sandiganbayan wielded their judicial powers to ensure that justice was served and meted out to those who most deserved it, had there been at least a single person who was in the middle of it all and who, driven by a sudden pang of conscience, done bravely to admit to his complicity and point to that individual or individuals who masterminded the entire scenario...

Had all these been done, true justice would have been served not only Ninoy's family but also the entire Filipino nation, which was deprived of the chance to be led by possibly the best President this country could have had.

### What now?

There is no debating the fact that the 10 convicts who were released have served their prison terms and are eligible for parole. But beyond the pale of legality comes a most intriguing and unfortunate question. What now becomes of Ninoy's, and for that matter Galman's killers?

It is distressing to note that the release of the final batch of convicts to the Aquino-Galman case drives the last nail into the coffin bearing the truth behind Ninoy's assassination.

Would the public expect those final convicts to now divulge the real mastermind? What if they defy do not know? Or what if their knowledge is limited to what was told them?

It is but fitting that the person who signed the pardon five-time 14 convicts was the prominent absentee at the People Power Revolution anniversary celebration last week.

At least she had the decency to send seven full days from the commemoration of an event that started on the tarmac when Ninoy lay dying, before allowing the last set of convicts to go free.

But that is another matter.

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# Gonzalez says Mancao's wife sought help

By Norman Bordadora

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ yesterday said Cesar Mancao's wife sought his help after 10 mafiosi were nabbed this summer police officers in Florida last year to connection with the Philippines' extradition request.

Gonzalez said there was a suggestion that Mancao might be able to cooperate with the government in prosecuting the Hacer-Corbito murders if the government managed to help him deal with his criminal cases.

"She mentioned a few things on what they knew and on what they can testify on," Gonzalez told reporters.

But he said nothing came out of the correspondence with Mancao's wife. He said he did not know the couple well and "didn't want to be caught with a front story."

### Crucial for some people

Gonzalez said the government had nothing to do with Mancao's reported plan to testify on what he knew about the abduction and killing of fallen-star "Bubby" Dacer and driver Emmanuel Corbito.

But he confirmed that Mancao was ready to testify on the double murder: "Yes, that's correct. When he is about to arrive, I'll tell you."

Gonzalez indicated that Mancao's testimony might affect certain personalities and lead to a new preliminary investigation of the case.

"[His testimony] would be quite crucial to some people," the justice secretary said.

"This will [involve] basically newly discovered matters which were not available before. If Mancao mentions several people here who were not indicted before ... we'll have to reopen the case for preliminary investigation so that we can indict whomever is mentioned."

### Dumlao's affidavit

Gonzalez also said e-mail from Mancao's camp appeared to be consistent with the first affidavit of his fellow former police officer, Glenn Dumlao.

# Mancao to bare brains

From page A-1

Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 19, where Mancao and 21 others are accused of killing Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito.

But the lawyer let on that the perjurious instinct by Mancao even as he is now a member of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (PAOCTF) under the administration of President Joseph Estrada.

He said Mancao's information was "the missing link that would bridge the gaps in the evidence presented in court," and that it would be clinched as the right time and the proper forum.

"We still enlighten the case but it does not necessarily mean that (his is where it ends," Gonzalez said of Mancao's affidavit.

### Lacson aide

Mancao served as aide to Sen. Panfilo Lacson when the latter was Philippine National Police chief and concurrent PAOCTF chair. He fled to the United States in July 2001.

On April 13, 2006, Mancao was taken into custody by US federal authorities as a "material witness" in an espionage case against Michael Ray Aquino, his former superior in the PAOCTF and also among the accused in the Dacer-Corbito case, and Lorie-Ann Angeles-Ello, an analyst of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In an affidavit in 2001, Glenn Dumlao, the former deputy chief for operations of PAOCTF-cum, said Hacienda Luisita heiress Jaime Zobel de Ayala and Lacson might have known of the double murders. Both females and Lacson denied this.

Dumlao also named Mancao and Aquino, who is still in US custody in connection with the espionage case, as among those who planned the double murder.

### Palace's 'natural enemy'

Talking yesterday with reporters, Lacson said he had heard about Mancao's affidavit but did not know its contents.

He said he hoped that Mancao told the truth in the document, and added that he would expect to defend himself should he be implicated.

"I am ready to defend myself because really I didn't have anything to do with that double-murder case," the senator said.

Lacson said the always adamant-Estrada had been promoting Mancao since September 2000 to implicate him because he was a "natural enemy" of Malacañang.

He again reiterated the purported 20-million-peso bribe offer made by Atty. Gen. Renato Pretsion to Mancao, in which the military intelligence chief offered the latter reinstatement in the PNP plus a promotion in exchange for implicating him in the crime.

It was Mancao himself who told him about Pretsion's phone call to Estrada, but later, Lacson said, adding:

"And his lawyer told me later, 'You know the story, sir. We both know nothing about this case.'"

### Personal knowledge

Dacer and Corbito were abducted at the corner of Ortigas Highway and Zobel Roxas Street in Metro Manila on Nov. 24, 2000.

Their remains were recovered a month later in Cavite and identified by forensic experts based on their dental records and personal effects.

Gonzalez said that in the affidavit signed on Feb. 14, Mancao narrated the circumstances that led to the murders but said he had no involvement in the crimes.

The lawyer said that everything in the document was of Mancao's personal knowledge, and that the latter might qualify to turn witness.

### Back in RP in 3 weeks

Gonzalez said Mancao also testified in the federal district court in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, that he would no longer contest his extradition and would be back in the Philippines within three weeks.

Asked why Mancao decided to return and testify on the contents of his affidavit, Gonzalez said: "He must have gotten a conscience."

Lacson said he had advised Mancao to stick to the truth even in the face of pressure.

He said it was possible that his former boss in the PAOCTF came forward in the case, "but I am not here anyone straight in the eye and say that I had nothing to do with the murder case."

### Palace 'favorite'

Asked if he thought Mancao was the type to crack to pressure, Lacson said he did not know the man that well as they worked together only when he was the PNP chief.

"But I am hoping and I am quite confident that he wouldn't crack in the witness stand," he said.

Asked if he thought what was happening now was related to next year's presidential polls, where he is expected to run, Lacson said that whether there was an election or not, he was the "favorite" of the Palace.

"I am the only one opposing the corruption of the people in Malacañang. They really find me a nemesis. They find me in opposition in [their] shenanigans, and they find me a nemesis, relentless enemy when it comes to the shady things they do," he said.

Lacson said he would not "backtrack" from his ambitions. "It's the people number (1) cannot be frightened)," he said.

### Other accused

On Feb. 5, the lawyers of Mancao, Aquino and Jovencito Medina, former radio technician, to be allowed to file a demurrer to evidence, which could lead to a dismissal of the double-murder case.

In separate manners, a demurrer to evidence was also filed by the lawyers of accused Rogelio Nemeño, Hardiner Ballesteros, Jose Bandanjac and Marcelo Tarroja, and Thomas Santiago, Marguerite Gomez, Ginoserano Perfilan-don and Rowland Salim.

A demurrer basically asks the court to determine the admissibility of the evidence so far presented.

Another accused, former PAOCTF-Visayas head Teodito Mitra, was shot dead in Tanza, Cavite, after he was tagged by policeman as the leader of the team that snatched, burned and buried Dacer and Corbito.

The others charged are Allan Cedenilla Villanueva, Vicente Arnaiz, Benjamin Tolentino, Rolando Lascañas, Mario Inumerable, Wilfredo Pelayo, Romeo Langamon, Diego de Pedro and Bernardo Maldoteson. With a report from Inquirer Research

# Gays, lesbians hear Mass

From page A-1

"The concern is our relationship with God. When you die, God will not ask you if you are gay/ He will ask you if you did good things. Salvation does not come from anyone but from God, and we accept Christ as the head of the Church," said Rev. Cresencio Aghuyan Jr., an openly gay pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC).

The MCC, a Quezon City-based Christian denomination, has a special ministry for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and "transgenders," or homosexuals who cross-dress.

Its church in Baguio is the third in the country that ministers to the gay community. The first two churches are in Malate's Gay and Quezon City.

"As long as traditional Christian churches continue to reject gays in their ministry and close the door on us, our church will keep on expanding," said Aghuyan.

### Catholic Church stand

But Baguio Bishop Carlito Cenzon said the Catholic Church had never discriminated gays but it was against same-sex relationships.

"The Catholic Church does not reject gays or lesbians; they are God's children, too. What we reject is their campaign to engage in same-sex relations and same-sex marriage. Sex is only for the married, and marriage is between a man and a woman," Cenzon said in a text message.

William Villamagna, one of the founders of the MCC Metro Manila, said the "gay pride Mass" in Ayuyang the on Gen. Bch final in the downtown area was meant to tear down the walls of the Christian faith.

"The MCC receives this from others every now and then, but we are not worried about these criticisms. Our church is not even an underground church; everybody is welcome. We are not afraid of rejection. We are here to the end, only God can judge us," Villamagna said.

### Mass ceremony

At the start of the Mass, Aghuyan asked the churchgoers to give the greetings of peace by kissing and hugging each other.

Just like any regular Mass held in Catholic and Protestant churches, the gay pride Mass involved opening prayers, praise songs, reading of the gospel, homily and communion.

The Mass, which took more than two hours, added controversy from those who attended as part of the ceremony. A choir sang "I Will Survive."

Julie Dalagasan, spokesperson of the Baguio-based Lesbians for National Democracy, said the Mass was a breakthrough.

"We know how the Bible was used to condemn homosexuality, but I am willing to study it more to liberate myself," she said.

The participants said they hoped the activity would lead to the establishment of a church that would regularly hold services for homosexuals.

### Discrimination

Men and women who regularly attend religious services in their communities would find themselves subjects of discrimination when their fellow church members find out that they are gays and lesbians, according to Aghuyan.

"There were those who experienced doors being literally shut in their faces. Others are being accused in their services[ but are told not to engage in 'gay practices,'" he said.

"But the issue is the point of having gay if you are not practicing a gay lifestyle? It is abnormal for us to court the opposite sex," he added.

Myke Solven, chair of the Progressive Organizations of Gays in the Philippines-Baguio, said members of his group expected criticisms from the Baguio community.

### God not judgmental

"I know we will be condemned, but the Bible says, 'If one is condemned in the name of the Lord, he or she is blessed.' We are opening our doors to ... discussions [on] people who have the courage to come out. God is not judgmental. We are willing to be stoned, pero yung dapat ang maintindihan ay meron ding hindi naghuhusga. Our door who would cast the stone should be without sin," Solven said.

But he said they are hopeful that they would be accepted and expand their ministry even to those outside the gay community.

"What really hurts is that when you are gay the traditional Christian church would tell you that you are going to hell because it is a sin to be a homosexual. They would cite the story of Sodom and Gomorrah," Aghuyan said.

"Why are these churches afraid of gays?" he asked.

Supreme Court of the Philippines
Judicial and Bar Council
Manila

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) announces the opening, for application or recommendation, of the following upcoming vacancies:

1. Two positions of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court vice Hon. MA. ALICIA A. MARTINEZ (whose optional retirement was approved effective 30 April 2009) and Hon. DANTE O. TINGA (who will compulsorily retire on 11 May 2009); and

2. Two positions of Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals vice Hon. EDGARDO P. CRUZ and Hon. TERESITA DY-LIACO FLORES (who will compulsorily retire on 12 May and 16 May 2009, respectively).

Applications or recommendations for these positions must be submitted not later than 18 March 2009 (Monday) to the JBC Secretariat, 2nd Flr. Centennial Bldg., Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila (Tel. No.552-9512; Fax No.552-9598; e-mail address jbc_supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph or jbc@sc.judiciary.gov.ph). Applicants or recommendees must submit six (6) copies of the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Application letter or Recommendation letter with conforme of the recommendee in the letter itself or a separate document | Write for the past two (2) years:<br>2009 Clearances from MS, Ombudsman, SB<br>Office of the Bar Confidant and employer |
| Personal Data Sheet (JBC Form 1 downloadable from the JBC Website http://jbc.judiciary.gov.ph) | Transcript of Judicial Records<br>2009 Police Clearance from place of residence |
| Proof of Filipino Citizenship | Certificate of Satisfactory Rating (with the Rating) |
| Certificate of Good Standing or latest Official Receipt from the IBP National Treasurer |
| Of Voter (Old) | |

The JBC also announces that the following are applicants for judgeship positions:

REGIONAL TRIAL COURT (RTC): (NCJR) VALENZUELA CITY (Brs. 268 & 270): AGBADA, Genie G.; AGCAOILI, Alfredo F.; ALTAREJOS, Mudez B.; APOLO, Raymunda C.; BAGAOISAN, Josephine C.; BALINANG, Lucrecio de E.; BALLOGUING, Merlita B.; BATARA, Jimmy Edmund G.; BUSTAMANTE, Manuel R.; CARPIO, Eduardo DJ.; CASTILLO, Porfirio Jr. T.; CATIVO, Teresita N.; CAWED, Ma. Joy O.; CEDILLO, Ruenio G.; CEQUEÑA, Maria Cheryl L.; CHUA, Manfi P.; DE GUZMAN, Hamabata S.; DIZON, Rodolfo B.; DUMLAO, Florentino Jr. R.; ESCOTO, Gina C.; FRANCISCO, Evangeline M.; GAJARDO, Pablo Jr. A.; GLODON, Manuel A.; HERNANDEZ, Myriam Sazan S.; HIDALGO, Maria Janina J.; HORNILLA, Linda M.; IDUIÑAN, Hilda P.; ITURRALDE, Philbert T.; JAMIAS, Bayani M.; LABITAG, Roberto T.; LIRAN, Ma. Reiner R.; MACABABA, Florentino M.; MANGENTE, Joe M.; MARCOS, Dante Angel C.; MATAMISAU, Emma C.; MATIRA, Rosanna DC.; MAYNIGO, Wilfredo L.; MONTEJO, Rossana M.; OBEJAS, Josesito D.; ORTILE, Alejandro OL.; PACOLOD, Lorenza B.; PAMINTUAN, Ricardo T.; PAZ, Nael B.; PEREZ, Angelo C.; PEREÑA, Victoria M.; SANCHEZ, Francisco III A.; SIMON, Lua F.; SOTTO, Lucena C.; SUAREZ, Danilo L.; TIEMZO, Efren B.; VEGA, Gregorio Jr. L.; VELASQUEZ, Gregorio M.; VILLAVERT, Cecilyn B.; VITO CRUZ, Josephine A. JREGION 09 SAN JOSE CITY, NUEVA ECIJA (Br. 39) ALOG, Loreto Jr. G.; AQUINO, Manuel R.; ARCEO, Wilfredo D.; ARIZALA, Angelo R.; FLORES, Christian B.; GARONG, Rose-M.; LEDDA, Dionisio Jr. D.; PEREZ, Angelo C.; SOTTO, Lucena C.; TOMAS, Norlando S.; VIVERO, Kevin Nestor R.; JREGION VI LEGASPI CITY, ALBAY (Br. 15): ALTEA, Ma. Eden H.; BIBOLERA, Henry V.; BUBANJUZ, Hector Jr. D.; CUANIO, Leo Ariel M.; CUBRADO, Agustin G.; CADAS, Oscar T.; CAMPOMANES, Marilyn R.; DE LEOZ, Mary Ines; D.; ESCOTO, Gina C.; GERONIO, Renato G.; JIMENEZ, Bernie Jr. R.; LAMUZO, Elmer M.; LOGRIGO, Frank E.; LOQUILLANO, Ma. Theresa SJ.; MANGENTE, Joe M.; MUÑOZ, Levi P.; NUQUI, Ruben Dario T.; QUIJANO, Milagros G.; RUBIO, Palmerin E.; SALGADO, Jose Ciemcodhames M.; TABORA, Perfecto Nixon C.; TAYO, Romeo S.; QUIRAT, SORSOGON (Br. 54): ABLES, Massimino R.; BORJA, Crispa Jr. O.; DELA CA, Juan S.; DIMAANO, Arnaldo D.; HERNANDEZ, Jose N.; JIMENEZ, Bernardo Jr. R.;

MUNICIPAL CIRCUIT TRIAL COURT (MCTC) JREGION VII (NEW WASHINGTON-BATAN, AKLAN): CIPRIANO, Maribel D.; DE LA CRUZ, Rene M.; ISARRIETA, Thea V.; INGENTE, Renato B.; ROLDAN, Antonio M.

The public may submit sworn complaint, written report, or opposition against any of the aforesaid applicants not later than 16 MARCH 2009 (Monday) to the JBC Secretariat.

All applicants for judicial positions must submit to the JBC-ASAP via fax, mail or e-mail their updated JBC Form 1 (Revised September 2007), proof of Filipino citizenship, and 2009 Ombudsman, MBI and Police Clearances, as well as the other requirements before the date scheduled for their interview. Those who fail to submit the necessary requirements shall neither be interviewed nor considered for nomination.

04 March 2009.

MA. LUISA D. VILLARAMA
Clerk of Court & JBC
Ex Officio Secretary

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# OPINION

## Attorney Mike

**EDITORIAL**

WE MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT IS EXACTLY that the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo (Attorney Mike" to various insiders and hangers-on), does as a lawyer—in the various scandals that have battered the walls of Malacañang, he has always come across as smooth operator rather than legal advocate—but his squirrel if somewhat summary defense of Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez the other day offered a timely reminder.

He can still earn in on the nub of the matter—a not inconsiderable skill, for a lawyer. "We were run even in the same class [in the Ateneo de Manila law school]. We were year mates but we were not batkas [classmates]," he said. This addresses the core issue as many people see it, that Gutierrez was hired to serve as the government's chief guilt-hunter because of her friendship with Mr. Arroyo (and, by extension, with Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo). We use the verb "address" advisedly however, because this first half of Arroyo's defense is meant to respond to the issue, without actually resolving it. They may not have been classmates, but in a small batch of would-be lawyers, did that really matter?

The point—or, rather, the proof—is that Gutierrez has acted more deferentially to her "year mate," treating him, despite the avalanche of scandals, with extra-tender kid's gloves. Thus, instead of acting as a tribune of the people, she has acted as though she were a Palace page.

The second half of Arroyo's defense of Gutierrez is a blanket assertion—a take-my-word-for-it argument, less than useful to any lawyer who must earn a living by the sweat of his brow. "She's just doing her job. Just let her alone, leave her alone," Arroyo said.

But, in fact, the impeachment complaint filed against Gutierrez by former Senate President Jovito Salonga and others alleges the exact opposite: that she is not doing her job, that in the midst of all the scandals plaguing the Arroyo administration the public must not let her alone.

The point—or, rather, the beginnings of proof—is that Gutierrez, except for one showcase filing against her former boss Hermogenes Perez, has failed to act decisively on any of the major scandals that have haunted the administration: the ones served as justice undersecretary and chief presidential legal counsel. Thus, instead of acting as the people's vanguard, she has acted as though she were the Praetorian guard.

If anything, the filing of the impeachment complaint comes two years too late. The very same case could have been filed against her in the House of Representatives—because of public trust and culpable violation of the Constitution, because of alleged inaction—right after she absolved everyone involved in the Mega Pacific scam. (This scam, to be sure, is included in the present complaint.)

After the Senate blue ribbon committee had established the anomalies in the Mega Pacific contract as facts, and the Supreme Court (after castigating the same Ombudsman for slowness of action) confirmed the existence of irregularity, what did Gutierrez do? She absolved everyone, like a priest in a Lenten vie. Her decision, we wrote in this same space on Oct. 8, 2006, "asks us to believe, against all evidence and experience, in a crime without criminals, an evil deed without evildoers."

That, the supreme irony: In her tenure as Ombudsman, Gutierrez has served as midwife to the perfect crime.

It may be that "Attorney Mike's" defense of a batch mate would not have come about without the enterprising work of a reporter (in this case, Kara David of GMA News). But this is not the first time that Arroyo had had the opportunity to speak to reporters. That he took the opportunity to ask the public to let the ombudsmen alone tells us something about his essentially political approach even to legal matters. That he took advantage of the opportunity to say anything at all—well, that says something about his relationship with Gutierrez. Apparently, while he requires the services of the avuncular Jesus Santos to do pugnacious Boy Bumidas to defend his actions, Attorney Mike thinks nothing of lawyering for his law school year mate. What, after all, are friends for?

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## A climate of abuse

**VIEWPOINT**

*Juan L. Mercado*

RAPE. WE ARE TOLD, "IS THE ONLY CRIME in which the victim often becomes the accused." The Philippine National Police "dramatized" 2,949 rape cases last year. That's four times the 2007 figure. Does this report mean more predators? 400K in those shadows?

Not really. These bulging numbers "may be as attributable to improved reporting," says the 2008 US State Department report on human rights. "We are catching glimpses only now of heinous crimes long perpetrated."

The PNP trained 1,036 human rights officers last year. Alone 9 percent of PNP officers today are women. Some staff new Women and Children Units in various stations. (Women account for 51 percent of public officials, corporate executives, managers, and supervisors, a country he has been savvy found.)

Traumatized victims, however, shrink from the stigma. Their families are cowed by political-styled vagaries. And the law many reinforce the cops.

Most police officers are decent. But "the 110,000-member PNP has deep-rooted institutional deficiencies," the US report says. "[K]ey factors from a widely held and accurate public perception that corruption remains a problem. PNP's internal Affairs Service remained largely ineffective."

Victims cower at the prospect of trials that may stretch five, six years. "Personal ties and sometimes bribery result in impunity for some wealthy or influential offenders," the report adds. "[This] contributes to widespread skepticism."

Former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos is the classic example. Famous citizens fought long before Jalosjos could be docked for raping an 11 year-old girl. He got true life sentences. In April 2007, that expelled Lawbreaker did Not be immediate 8 wally weighed up P900,000 in court-ordered damages. By then, the victim was almost 20.

Despite protests, President Macapagal-Arroyo commuted the still influential Jalosjos' double life sentence. In 2012, he may qualify for pardon. That's when he turns 76.

The thorny political trip with pardon proves that what if prosecutors morph into abusers with badges?

"There were reports of rape and sexual abuse of women in protective custody," the State Department pointed out. Victims were the defenseless "women from marginalized groups, such as suspected prostitutes, drug users." Others were subjects arrested for minor crimes like panhandling.

Vulnerable employees in special economic zones were "particularly at risk." The Philippines has 45 privately-owned SEZs. The governments operates one each in Cavite, Bataan, Mactan/Cebu and Baguio.

Most SEZ workers are economic migrants. They lack independent unions to resist them. "Their contracts," featured long hours, barring their contracts wouldn't be renewed."

Problems are "exacerbated by the failure, if not the reluctance, of even our most decorated institutions to help the victims and prosecute the perpetrators," the Inquirer recently noted. There are churches, schools, law agencies and courts.

"Seeking help and not knowing where to go, these women victims survivors often find our churches closed," they added, but they "sometimes are other Scribe or interlocutors."

Many "salient but hostile programs" of institutions "dedicated to serve and protect women, children and the poor" are weak. Review and revise the 2000 protocol on "Battered Care of Victims and Offenders," they urged Catholic bishops. Heads of other Christian churches should strip away attitudes that spur violence against women and children.

"Priorities overlook of sexual abuse cases in senate needs decision," they added government. School curricula ought to incorporate a "human sexuality education centered on responsibility and respect rights. He must see in our sexuality created union the face of God."

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## Right to grieve

**THERE'S THE RUB**

*Conrado de Quiros*

MOST EVERYONE WHO SPOKE AT OUR mother's wake delivered the same message. Death is not a cause for grieving, it is a cause for rejoicing, it is not the end of the journey it is the beginning of it.

Our parents put it a little on the extreme side. He said that every time he presided over a wake and heard the kin of the dead in the throes of inconsolable grief, sobbing and embracing the open window of the coffin, calling out the name of the departed, he fumed. He would berate them and remind them that their loved one was lucky he had passed on to a life alone of the cares of this world, and assuming that he had spent his sojourn on earth in relative virtue, he would even now be occupying one of the rooms in heaven. Jesus Christ did advertise the special mansions of the divine and reliable saying, "In my father's house there are many rooms." The priest said he would remind the wailing kin of this, and the wailing would dissipate, like smoke blown away by a gust of wind.

I am not entirely knocking it, given that this was said in much good faith. The messengers were completely well meaning, eager to give comfort to the afflicted, to lift up the spirits of the downcast. I suspect it is a standard message that they give on occasions like that, trained to take much of specificities, like the age of the departed and the circumstances of his or her departure. "Old age and natural causes are pathetically hospitable to it.

Indeed, it is not a bad message, given the timing of our wake, which was the eve of Lent. We learned it still helps to get used to that word one month on Holy Wednesday, the solemn start of that holiest of Christian seasons, which ends joyously with Easter Sunday signifying the triumph of good over evil, the soul over the body, life over death. A day reduced in by the ringing of the bells and the bursting of doves into their doll's "Hosanna."

I'm not convinced to be tugged by the Hebrews of it. Time enough, in our case, having seen one mother reduced to decrepitude and mindlessness by life's adversities and the weight of her years, our dad was treated her passing without a sense of relief. It gives you whole new insights into those cases in the Pentecostal churches where the relatives of those on life support fight every injunction for holding them from having the life support taken away. Life isn't always simple. Neither is death. You are ravaged by the spectacle of a loved one helplessly in the indignity of being kept alive by tubes, such as the erratic beating of the heart and the labored pumping of the lungs sometimes fills. You will not always know what to do. I don't know that there are always right and wrong choices there.

But all this notwithstanding, the cessation of all vital signs, the termination of breath, still brings with it a sense of finality, a sense of demarcation, a sense of divide, that ends it, a sense of loss. Whatever this age, whatever the circumstances in which it happens, there is the sense of loss at the death of a loved one, whatever your beliefs, whether you are one a total wrecking crew or a utter integrated being simply dis-integrated, there is the sense of loss at the death of a loved one. A sense of loss that is rounded upon, so violently, by blinker consumers who without warning drop it to the dirt.

Curiously, it is not just men and women of faith who like to indulge, or impute, this easy platitude. I have always felt the same sense of revulsion on kind or near sensibilities whenever an activist or revolutionary died, more often than not from violence unsung, and his comrades took intense umbrage to some grief taken over whatever's cause.

The sentiment of sense is not without a sense of heroism, or offering larger than life that even to those who understand its context, I wonder if they are not self-empty by the substitutions. Of course the speakers perhaps it by recalling a thing or two about the departed, extolling his virtues, but only largely in passing, planting over it as though the occasion of his or her dying, breathing, and wildly paining individually would earn a pall on the collective number. The speakers then go on to say with fervor that he would be surely missed by the movement he served so well and by the downtrodden who would have lost a champion. But at least he and she loved ones he left behind have the consolation of knowing that many others would rise to take his place and the struggle would go on.

I don't know, but I've always thought the loved ones he left behind would be more interested by the sentiments of love he "laughed and cried, doubted his fought bravely on, and how though others taught rise to his place, he would be utterly irreplaceable.

I have always thought people had the fundamental, inalienable, and truly human right to grieve. I have always thought people had the right to feel a deep, inalienable, foraging sense of loss whenever a loved one dies. Whatever the age, whatever the time, whatever the circumstances of that loved one's death. It is a foundation of humanity or humaneness, the contradictions of humanity or humaneness, that we feel so intensely the loss of those we love and mourn their loss so. I'll restate those are ways and ways to express the presentation. One need not always weep loudly or display hysterics, which can wear down everybody or enfeeble their nerves to a frazzle, and make them secretly wish you would just shut up and get over it. One can be grieving with the one who is desperately trying to reach out to us in the coffin. One can always maintain a certain dignity while at it.

In fact, one can always say, not unlike the poet Emily Dickinson in Because Ithiopia's "The Remains of the Day," after carrying out his duties respectfully finally the mother lay dead flesh is massive under repairs:

"Please excuse me, I have to grieve now."

# LGUs gearing for 2010—Claudio

## POLITICAL TIDBITS

*Melinda Olivares-Cinco*

OMBUDSMAN MERCEDITAS GUTIERREZ, fighting back the impeachment case filed by former Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile (along and evil way, my leaders, sought to dismiss the first DOJ case she's facing by opining that 56 percent of the cases it had filed against her had been mere witnesses who he had of supporting documents. She referred to the episode in New York City 23 years ago which a periodically talked up by the media. Marcos lovers, fans and others for their own agenda, whenever he brings up the issue, he's not referring to any of the 508 (508) documents. Gutierrez was materialized about this episode and I told her to set a media gathering hosted by both high-security.

* * *

Just after the Edsa revolution, my husband, then an Army colonel, was requested by Salonga to be his aide-de-camp for three trips overseas in chief of the Philippine Constabulary. In the first trip, Salonga, he had been junior aide-de-camp of Vice President Emmanuel Pelaez (in 1961 Salonga joined Pelaez's delegation for the South Chinese Cuba to Washington, where he was a correspondent for the New York Salonga's group, which included his brother-in-law (another Cuba) Chief Justice Pedro Ilaga and Mr. Lydia Salonga, spent the day at the Hotel Metropole (I don't recall the name) shopping at the department store (I mean their hotel) for dinner. My husband, who invited Salonga's attaché case, said he would check out messages at the hotel and join them shortly. The three were hanging when suddenly they realized husband and said they had dropped some cash. They checked it out but when they looked up, Ilaga's briefcase and Lydia's handbag were gone. Soon my husband got back from the hotel, and I told him about Salonga's attaché case, and later the party reported all the theft to the police. Covered by media later, Salonga explained that aside from his wife's handbag, Ilaga's briefcase was also stolen (he intended only stolen copies of some documents. These in his own briefcase were retained because they were with his aide.

* * *

Salonga avoided posting political color into the impeachment case against the ombudsman by stating his affiliation at Mendoyan and Ilaga's

*Melinda Olivares-Cinco*

Kasangga and not as that association of the LP for yesterday former Senate and LP President Franklin Drilon admitted that the LP was behind the entire move. "In all the government of corruption." That statement was made, as I opined what I thought might be sought to avoid public and the impeachment move. That is understandable, since neither Gutierrez authorized the filing of a corruption case against former President Joseph Estrada (ex-Senate Senate Senator Blas Ople, former Ang Kasangga Acosta, both LP stalwarts, for alleged illegal disbursement of government funds to WOX. Moreover, the complaint also cited other personalities, including former Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora (of course LP stalwart) and the then Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, also LP stalwarts. The problem is that politicizing the impeachment will drive the battle lines between the administration and Lakas and Kampi (since the matter of impunity).

* * *

One of the complaints against Gutierrez is "gross inexcusable negligence" for siding on cases such as the World Bank bidding and fertilizer scams. As I see it, the complaint is clearly influenced by the broader hearings where no proof beyond reasonable doubt need to be presented and which frequently thrive on innuendoes, whereas the ombudsman has to come up with cases that can stand in court, which obviously takes much longer. Besides, Gutierrez organized a task force (a brilliant team she created Task Force Abuse with 40 investigators. The team involved going to 17 regions and talking to more or less 178 project proponents, including Congressmen, governors and mayors. I also know there were to file four cases against former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, his ailing wife Charito and his brother-in-law quite tough, given that he was her former boss and she was very close to his wife.

Gutierrez will get her chance to explain to the House committee on justice what her office did with the seven cases (out of the complaint. For this study but No. 3 crime is that she was a bench mate of Mike Arroyo at the Ateneo Law School.

* * *

At the 95th birthday party of UP regent and city leader Nelia Teodoro-Gonzalez at the Tower Club two weeks ago, I ran into presidential political adviser Cielito Claudio. In the query on whether the 2010 election would push through, he replied that the answer is a resounding yes and that the entire nation talks between Lakas and Kampi that's going full blast. Everyone is gearing for the election, especially at the local level, he said, and this, in fact, is the reason for the delay in the plan to unite the two parties. I expressed doubt that unification would be achieved, given the intensity of political rivalries at the local level, but Claudio estimated that only 30 percent of the provinces would experience political problems which would be substantial to the administration candidate.

What about the noise to Congress about Charter change (Cha-cha), PM fears nothing to do with that. That's Congress's. So far, the political groups are concerned, baby step decision.

* * *

Speaking of Nelia's birthday, guests were grouped according to their involvement with former city mayor she has long advocated. Phil representatives were the UNPAM, UP Law Babies, the Philippine Ethics (school Society) and a few others. I made with Nelia in the Iloilo Boys Ateneo, founded by Fr. Pierre Tritz, and from there to time, I attend successful events at MSPC where she sits on the board. To Nelia goes my husband's prayer for many more years of (hellacious) service to God and country.

* * *

Time to to be dull (yes guests Cielo and Dinah Ann Sinsuat) at 4 p.m. at the Quezon Memorial Mayor Cielo of Marawi with Prof. Yasi Abbarad of the Ateneo Law School and Imelda Deboncour, consultant to CHED's Commission on Faculty & Life.

# The war is not over

## HUMAN FACE

*Ma. Ceres P. Doyo*

WORLD WAR II FILIPINO VETERANS WHO fought alongside US troops more than 60 years ago still can't get some military compensation. The announcement came even while many of those hardy Filipino veterans lives and abroad are dying every day before the eyesore. Many died poor. Some died in the streets, for instance, which means their bereaved families cannot get the compensation.

The war is not over. The wounds need to remain open and it is time for healing to see some of those deaths don't hooked to have and not be forgotten and hanging on just until... And see that right, thanksgiving for people not?

The outrageous thing about this is that those who had fought and died for our country are treated worse than their counterparts who have remained here. No wonder so many had gone to the land of milk and honey (now the land of collapsing financial institutions) even if that meant losing some of their dignity by living in neighborhoods and doing jobs that the natives in the Philippines and grow old in the embrace of their families were better off, I suppose.

I could not help asking them: What was it that drove many of them, brave men to forsake the land of their youth, the land they had defended? What was it that turned their hearts against the land of a time when shadows were falling on their lives and twilight was nigh?

America had always been in their hearts, in fact even the saying. And the dream to set foot on the land of opportunity included the endless search for a way to stay on the soil that entitled a Gov. Douglas MacArthur had never died.

Once strong soldiers that now battle their bodies some crumpled by the loss of their old strength and their compassion for compensation. That long wait was over when the US Immigration Act of 1990 finally opened the doors for them. Under that law, Filipinos who served in the US Armed Forces in the Far East, in the Philippine Commonwealth army or in recognized guerrilla units could apply for US citizenship.

More aging veterans left home since, in the hope that, as US citizens, they could send home part of their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) there. They had to survive on food and lodging and many doesn't take in the end of government money, so that there wouldn't be enough left for their families in the Philippines.

It was heart-rending.

* * *

I was at the Collegiate on Women Entrepreneurship Summit at the World Trade Center last Monday and it was good to see so many women entrepreneurs and to hold be entrepreneurs in the office.

Only a portion of the WTC was used to space was expensive. There were just too many leaders who was a good sign. The walking around and talking to and buying products was not easy. The impression was dense as this again but in a busy airs and lobbying atmosphere where conversation is difficult and not to be as rowdy. What's a little more space, ah, but women thrive even in the tightest situations.

Readers wrote to ask for more information and to react to the column piece. "Microfinance in these hard times" (Jan. 31). Like the Quezon City Department of Trade and Industry distributed booklets on where to go for financing ("Financing Programs for Microentrepreneurs") and how to put up a business. The booklet was prepared by the DTI. Another provides a listing of financing institutions and what they offer and requires, etc., while the latter is a step by step how-to. There was a long line to the DTI booth. Those interested should contact DTI Bureau of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development (BSMED) at 751-7526, [bsmed@dti.gov.ph](mailto:bsmed@dti.gov.ph), [www.dti.gov.ph](http://www.dti.gov.ph) or the Philippine Trade Training Center for seminars (8889302 to 70, [ptc@ptc.gov.ph](mailto:ptc@ptc.gov.ph), [www.ptc.gov.ph](http://www.ptc.gov.ph)).

* * *

Correction: In the column piece "Using superstudies to success" (Feb. 12, 2009). The column says that the father of the rape-murder victim had a break-and-fixed agency turning down his daughter's body. The correction: The motorcycle was used by the victim of appeal that circulated in the internet for some time and which called many Antipassers to take out safety in that authorities would act. From the time this story broke on Feb. 3 to Feb. 11, the DOJ was responding soon enough. I was piqued but I responded by giving space in the letter of appeal, but also, the information on the father turned out to be wrong. I am thankful the victim's father is alive and well in Pangasinan.

There is the topic that the victim may not have been raped. It seems the investigations have been going astray. By the way, I never named the victim or the family of the victim in the column piece.

In a follow-up article in the Inquirer (Feb. 21), the victim's brother was quoted as saying that the family had "felt bad about the reports as we did not want to have any statement earlier." (Note: I wish to point out that the DOJ was not the source of many of the reports earlier before the case were global in playing up the case to prod the authorities to act, the local media must have gotten overzealous. In short, the media created the problem.

The tape of a statement is not only by public prosecutor of her genitalia. Using force and inserting anything (inanimate objects included) into the victim's genitalia, men or other body orifices is also rape. Rape is no longer a crime of passion. Rape is crime against it is not about the victim's desire to, it is a crime of violence against a human being.

* * *

Sunday, March 8, is International Women's Day. Pray this invokes, exist, inspires, the, all-[illegible].

*Send feedback to [cmyap@gmail.com](mailto:cmyap@gmail.com)*

# Plan B

OH MY GOD! SOMEBODY FOUND HITLER AND PUT HIM IN Jamaica my Hon and my Gods brothers on a plane. Next flight to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Four thousand eight hundred thirty three miles away as the crow flies, a quarter boy for the Middle East DPW, who has been working in the Kingdom for more than two decades, awaited us.

If there was one place on earth I most expected to find any traffic, it would be Jerusalem, it would be Riyadh. It is a land of one-lane, two-lane, four-lane, six-lane, eight-lane, ten-lane highways and one-way streets and more one-way streets. Traffic jams and traffic snarls around the clock. Everyone I had ever died head to foot in black abayas. Talking to a man who is not your brother, son or husband can get you arrested. Women in jail. That and taking the law, which it for jars on it.

## YOUNG BLOOD

*Bernice Calupad*

We seem to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? the welcome contributions from the twenty-something and below —Ed.

In college, swapped with students and with our professors' "best of country" speeches ringing in my ears, I had decided that I would work and make a life in the Philippines. The American dream was for me. My background was comfortable enough so that one family's survival did not depend on my seeking greener pastures abroad.

Everything had seemed mapped out: a working career, great friends, the hustle and bustle of my life, stable, concrete, coffee shops, four-seasons traffic. What life in Manila has come to mean, there was always my beloved hometown of Bacolod to go back to.

But the best laid plans often end up skewered or tossed to the wind.

Saudi Arabia is home to more than one million Filipinos. Yet my new home was the complete opposite of the one I left behind. White Muslim women and Asians. Beards a must and robed. There are no sidewalk vendors, no kinds that need corners, no pot-holed roads. Crime is a rarity. You can walk around with your bag unknowingly open and still have your wallet when you get home. Public restrooms are well built and discreetly sprinkled in architectural beauty.

The old neighborhoods of Batha, a warren of buildings clustered with shops, restaurants, cargo businesses, and architecture-esthetic, makes you feel right at home. It's the Hiphop quarters, where you can grab a bite at Quiapo restaurant or shop at Manila Plaza. Indian and Bangladeshi salesmen hawk socks and shirts selling, "Sir, nice. Mura lang. I give discount." Sometimes they gold shops names "Kanjar," where a bodega or gem was made.

The Kingdom, home to Islam's two holiest cities, Makkah and Madinah, is one of the most conservative societies in the world. Alcohol and pork are banned. There are no cinemas, bars or any public place where unmarried men and women may mingle freely. Women are not allowed to drive. In most-indoor shopping centers (yes, there are women-only stores and banks), male staff will offer to get you a size, item or recommend a good foundation to match your skin tone.

This peculiar mix of tradition and modernity staggering wealth and decrepit squalor can be fascinating and confusing to an outsider like me.

As a woman, I am bound by many restrictions. We I also enjoy the customary respect and regard for women here, to boot. I do not need to get in line behind men; I can sail straight through to the front. If anyone does harass me on the street, such as delivering a pool toilet right hook, I can count on someone to help me out. In fact, on weekends, the women-only shopping centers are filled with families. Individuals are kept out as ladies aren't opted in or pestered.

I expected to be bound to men or to be forced in by all of the rules. I didn't expect to find a second home and a new perspective on the life of Filipino workers abroad.

The OFW experience is a chaotic, bizarre, jubilant, tragic bag of emotions and experiences. Sometimes, it is all of the above.

As success stories go, a number of Pinoys occupy high positions in the Kingdom's largest corporations. Once, while attending an international hotel at a school, I saw two Filipinos walking by, toting Louis Vuitton bags. My friend pointed out that they were teachers in Saudi schools. Their monthly salaries are more than enough to live on comfortably or to enjoy. Adding to that surreal experience, a Saudi teenage girl I knew to be some prince's daughter walked up to me and asked, "Where buying salabat? Hindi Indio?"

But not all are success stories. Some Filipinas suffer beating, rape and homemaker other abuses at the hands of their employers. Many Filipinos are trapped in a cycle of debt and miserable salary are no recourse, leaving about them has become like watching news of corruption back home on "TV Patrol"—you have grown on accustomed to them that you have become desensitized.

And perhaps because life can get lonely and monotonous, many about the Kingdom complain that a life of love could culminate with a new husband, a new wife, or new girlfriend. A friend once went to a party and was shocked when someone asked her if she and her husband were "legal". Legal: topical opium for legally married, and not just living together with a false marriage certificate?).

The story of the OFW mainstream is seeing the courage and heroism among our countrymen. This week-ends, a kababayan, who works at a local bookstore chain, pedals his bike around our neighborhood, selling diapers, alcohol and talents to augment his income and send his daughter through nursing school. Many community groups continually raise funds for destitute Filipinos and both Manila hotels and impoverished Bicol. An old high school friend has been working here for four years to finance her four siblings' education.

For all the lamentations that "life is hard in the Philippines," I miss my country. I can see the longing, too, in my parents, who eagerly await the news daily on The Philippines Channel, especially during the daily forecasts and tallying of local politicians embroiled in the latest corruption scandals.

For the moment, my feet are firmly planted in the Middle East. It is here that my family and I can be together, before time and circumstance part us again. It is here where I can practice my own freedom, and where, against all expectations, I have made a life. I guess our best laid plans don't always turn out the way we want them to because there's something better waiting to surprise us.

I don't know how long I am meant to be here—three years or 20? But I take great comfort in the thought that for all the many uncertainty of life, one day I will go back to that rising, chaotic, glorious place we'll have call home.

*Bernice Calupad, 26, graduated from UP Diliman with a degree in journalism. She is now pursuing a law education to finish a course on coming soon to.*

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# Nepal's first pharmacist trained in RP hospitals?

LETTERS

I READ THE NEWS ITEM REgarding the 42 Nepalese doctors admitted for residency training at the Rizal Medical Center, a 400-bed government hospital. (Inquirer, 2/16/09) It is laudable also considering that this will help rehabilitate a center that the hospital can use to improve its facilities, while filling up a serious shortage of doctors. But this is not the first time that the Nepalese government has sent a hospital personnel to train in our country.

Sometime in 1990, a Nepali by the name of Pradhan Ji can't remember the first name) was sent by the Nepalese government to train in some of government hospitals in Metro Manila. He claimed that he was to be "the first pharmacist" in Nepal.

Pradhan underwent intensive training at San Lazaro hospital where he stayed the longest. He not only learned the rudiments of running a hospital pharmacy, he was also taught to mark on pharmaceutical preparations, including gabrindol, as compounding was in vogue then, including the proper ratios of ingredients, anesthetics, distilled water, etc.

In his interim, I was amazed at his performances as a "first timer," how he would sometimes ask me about the technical problems of the formulations he was working on. I was honored to give answers, which I would dish out to him before he started compounding.

His attitude he was his country's first and was expected to learn his commitment. He didn't press any communication problems as he could speak English...there was no language barrier.

At last I was paroled, free and double glad that we have been a part of the development of Nepal's health system!

**—PURITA B. TEJADA, retired chief pharmacist, San Lazaro Hospital**

# US pay package unfair to dead vets and widows

WHAT A VERY NICE ILOCOno! titled "Better than nothing," (Inquirer, 2/28/09) But is better than nothing enough? $2 5,000 or $5,000 paid by the US government in recognition of wartime services is really worth the wait for the Filipino World War II veterans who suffered never-ending decades of indignity as a result of the limitations that of 1946 passed by the US Congress, which made them appear to be mercenaries.

But the the much-vaunted $15.98 million compensation package for living WWII Filipino veterans in the recently passed US stimulus package discriminated against the 882,000 surviving spouses of Filipino soldiers and guerrillas who died fighting the Japanese invaders and occupation forces, in a war that was not of their own making, in defense of freedom, democracy and loved ones.

Considering that the US Veterans Affairs Office listed only 18,000 surviving Filipino World War II veterans out of the 85,000 certified by the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office as still actually receiving monthly pensions of $5,000, some 32,000 of us were left out of the bounty. Where did the US Veterans Affairs Office get its figure that? Sure it make sense to provide funds for this 18,000, rather than others who fought side by side with American soldiers against the Japanese? Does this US Congress mean the sons of the 17,000 (who were left out to become illegitimate offspring of society) to go to the hills to continue fighting another war against the government—another $5 billion shall be its money?

World War II veterans waiting for their turn to claim their benefits from US Veterans Department Affairs. (File photo)

**—GODOFREDO G. PUTZEL, past commander, Veterans Federation of the Philippines, Dasol South (Inside Veterans Park, Caesar Ave Ortiz Veterans District)**

# Kaya Natin! expresses support for full automation

WE, THE FOUNDING LEADers of Kaya Natin! a National Movement for Good Governance and Ethical Leadership, fully support the Commission on Elections' program for the full automation of the 2010 elections. We believe that the Filipinos' right to elect our leaders is one of the main pillars of our democracy, thus we need a first-rate election that the sense of fully automating the upcoming elections is very critical to our country's future.

Given the history of widespread cheating in our country's past elections, we believe that by fully automating the upcoming elections, election cheating and fraud can be minimized, thus ensuring that the true mandate of the people will be served. Aside from this, the full automation of the elections will help minimize human error and, at the same time, allow for the Filipino people to know the results of the elections within a short period of time.

As local government leaders, we have seen the importance of electing effective and ethical leaders through fair and honest elections. The full automation of the elections will level the playing field, especially for worthy upright and good intentioned candidates who may not have enough financial resources to hire poll watchers to guard their votes. An electing good leaders, the Filipino people can expect good governance leading to more efficient delivery of basic services.

We call on our lawmakers to work for transparent, clean and honest elections by immediately passing the necessary supplemental budget for the full automation of the upcoming elections.

We call on President Macapagal-Arroyo to appeal to her allies in Congress to pass the budget necessary for the full automation of the upcoming elections.

Finally, we call on all Filipinos to join us in exerting pressure on our government leaders, especially on our congressmen and senators, for the immediate approval of the supplemental budget that will ensure us of a fully automated election in 2010.

**—JESSE BARRIENTO, mayor, Naga City**
**GRACE NADAL, governor (Subic)**
**EDDIE PUGEDA, governor (Pampanga)**
**SOSLA LORENZO, mayor, San Isidro, Nueva Ecija**
**Teodoro Ingolio, governor, Ifugao**

# Discipline comes from within, not from outside

I AM REACTING TO JOE Natanawi's news report regarding the chances for Philippine Sports Commission chief Harry Angeles of remaining and Tony Siddayao to head the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) during sabungan dinner in Malate, Manila. (Inquirer, 2/24/09)

I am specifically appalled by the reason he gave for endorsing these choices. His reason is not only unreasonable and shallow, but downright insensitive.

Discipline must particularly that of an athlete's, should be developed from within. It is the responsibility of PSC officials to develop a program that develops this kind of discipline that our athletes need to excel in competitions. Pulling in incentives to come up with such a program, they should blame themselves that the various sports and boat units whose owners and resellers have the right to make a living), for the inability to post performances.

Discipline cannot come from the outside, nor developed by someone else's discipline or determination, a false discipline. You can imitate athletes from best practices during their training, but with the same discipline and the mind's external forces watching them, they will easily fall into "temptations." Besides, the deserved here points are not the only ones in the victory of PSC or accessible to our athletes.

On the other hand, given today's worsening global economic crisis, Angeles should of to have considered that the sports budget of the PSC and the PSC are providing jobs to hundreds of people who are of their jobs breadwinners of their families or working students trying to hard to improve their lot in life. Doesn't this mean anything to Angeles? Where's his humanity?

Aside from lacking human compassion, Angeles must have a shot of memory, too. Some years ago, the area was like a shame, a habitat of vagrants and a haven for lawless elements and criminals barely, not a safe and nice place for our athletes to be so close to. Then the establishments came with PSC's consent, and today these sorry structures, turned it into a lively lighted and much safer place. For this, we should be grateful to them instead—unless they're violating a contract or law.

**—HUGH TAN, pasilaw2013@yahoo.com**

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Across the NATION

# Korean accuses Palafox of breach of confidentiality in deal

# Bomb from war on MILF kills 3 kids

COTABATO CITY—A bomb left behind by the government war on separatist guerrillas killed three children and wounded five others on Tuesday in a Maguindanao town, prompting peace advocates to call on both government and guerrillas to clean up civilian areas of war materiel.

Mary Ann Arnado, executive director of the Mindanao People's Caucus, issued the call following an explosion in Bulalo, Maguindanao on Tuesday that killed three children and wounded five others.

Police authorities said the children were playing when they unearthed a firearms cache shell.

Chief Insp. Romulo Jabonete, Antomoncom Region in Muslim Mindanao police chief, said the children were playing inside a rice mill when they unearthed the mortar shell.

"One of them accidentally hit the explosive with a hard object and it exploded," said Jabonete in a phone interview.

Jabonete said two of the five injured victims remained in critical condition at a government run hospital here.

MULTI PURPOSE
A boat parked ashore in a fishing village in Davao City is transformed into a drydock for repairs. (Edwin Espejo Jr.)

## Calamities take P1.7-B toll on E. Visayas

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE TYphoons and floods that swept through Eastern Visayas, one of the country's poorest regions, last year have damaged P1.7-billion worth of private and government infrastructures across the region.

The calamities also claimed 47 lives, according to a report on destructions prepared by the Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) Eastern Visayas Regional Office.

Ruby Rosete, regional OCD spokesperson, said all the three typhoons that hit the region in 2008, or tam Frank that was most devastating. It killed 28 people and destroyed more than P600 million in infrastructure and crops.

Floods from heavy rains in February last year killed 15 persons and destroyed at least P1 billion in infrastructure and crops, Gomez said.

Flora that occurred last year in the old public market is located, Leyte and residential areas in Tacloban City burned over P11 million in pieces of property.

Eastern Visayas is among the regions in the country that often experience natural calamities like typhoons. An average of 10 typhoons and tropical depressions occur in the region each year.

While nothing could be done about the negative occurrence of typhoons in Eastern Visayas, Gomez said their effects could be minimized if the region's local government units (LGUs) have disaster management plans in place.

Northern Samar and Southern Leyte were among LGUs in Eastern Visayas that have active disaster management offices, he said.

Southern Leyte suffered one of the most devastating natural calamities when a mudslide buried the entire village of Guinsaugon in St. Bernard town, killing over a thousand people, including 208 elementary students on Feb. 17, 2006.

Early this year, the province of Northern Samar suffered heavy losses due to the monstrous seas that killed 13 persons and destroyed pieces of property worth P27 million.

## RP base of China drugs, says PDEA chief

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo, who had appointed her self-acting Drug Czar, laughs with Nicanor Santos III, chair of the Dangerous Drugs Board, at a seminar in Malacañang. (MALACAÑANG PHOTO)

## NEWSBRIEFS

### DAVAO CITY

#### NPA admits attack

THE NEW People's Army (NPA) admitted that it was behind Sunday's burning of a Globe Telecommunications facility in Panabo City.

Ernesto Santiago, political secretary of the NPA's Southern Mindanao Regional Committee, said in a statement that the 11:45 p.m. attack was a punishment for Globe because the company has allowed the military to use its cell towers for their intelligence operations.

Residents and village officials were being questioned by the military, whom they were harassed by soldiers attending information about the movement," he said.

Santiago also said a Lt. Brian Pinson of the Army's 2nd Special Forces warned residents against supporting the NPA, or they would face the "consequences" of battles.

Maj. Randolph Calanogbang, spokesperson of the military's Southern Mindanao Command said: "That's a lie. Soldiers are there to secure the facility and the residents."

**—Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao**

### DIGOS CITY

#### 4 held for drugs

AGENTS of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) arrested 4 land base persons during a drug buy-bust operation at the City Overland Transport Terminal here on Saturday.

Supt. Melanio Abella, PDEA provincial director, identified the operations unit Jose Moreno Jr. and George Sangalang of this city, Florian Nila of Compostela City and Mahinday Mangkat, 46, of Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur, yielded two packets of suspected shabu when PDEA agents arrested them in a car. Also seized were a .45 caliber pistol and a hand grenade from the mother of Moreno.

The arrested suspects would be charged with violations of anti-drug laws, he said.

**—Orlando Dinoy, Inquirer Mindanao**

### PDRAC, Pampanga

#### Highway billboards

TWO MORE illegal billboards have been put up along the Pampanga segment of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, breaking the billboard-free policy of this national government on the country's longest toll road.

One was built at the end of Angeles City's Fields Avenue, which is near the boundary side of the Clark Freeport. The other one was in Barangay Mawaca here. Blades of steel and exposed soft materials have become the prominent popular local offense.

In separate interviews, Angeles City Mayor Francis Nepomuceno and Porac Mayor Angelito Santos said the billboards were illegally constructed since no building permits were obtained or issued for those.

**—Lucelle Bugay, Inquirer Central Luzon**

### BATANGAS CITY

#### Trader murdered

A 44-YEAR-OLD businessman was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in Barangay Sta. Pisque at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Supt. Abel Tacuan, Sta. Teresa chief of police, said victim Alejandro Solis of this city was standing in front of his cellphone shop when the gunman casually walked toward him and shot him in the head.

**—Marvin Q. De Leon, Inquirer Southern Luzon**

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

# Why Siruma stays poor and isolated

By Jonas Cabiles Sinfuego
Inquirer Correspondent

ONLY TYPHOONS KNOW POOR SIRUMA, OR so it seems.

In 1995, the sleepy coastal town of Camarines Sur ranked first economics of national attraction when "Rosing" Cisneros, (stage name: Angela), one of the strongest superhyphoons to hit the country, made landfall and brought death and destruction.

Cisneros failed as fast as its relief goods were distributed.

Siruma, a fourth class municipality (annual income: P50 million-P55 million) situated about 60 kilometers northeast of Naga City, remains among the poorest in the province, and Mayor Nestor Vitz and other residents are attributing their failing economy to the festering condition of the town's only access road to its neighbors.

"During the rainy season, the Tinambac-Siruma Road becomes impassable and the town is cut off from its neighbors," Vitz says.

He says the bad road has been undermining all other local efforts to improve the municipality. "Unless the road is rehabilitated, it will be difficult for us to implement other projects."

### Gullies and potholes

The 40-kilometer road traverses the villages of Poblacion, Mahayahay, La Fortuna and Pinagdanan in Siruma, and San Vicente, Magsaysay (Camp 4), La Medalla (Mile 19), Sagrada (Camp 6), San Antonio (Camp 7), San Roque, Salvacion, Camagong, and Bicaray in Tinambac.

Throughout the ravenous, hazardous journey, gullies and potholes.

When it rains, the road evaporates into an array of rice puddles, as some portions become very muddy and slick. Siruma Vice Mayor Herson Mandicon says: "Residents even say that if rice were planted in the road during the wet season, it could be harvested in time for summer."

Still, several jeepneys dare to handle Tinod-Iner boat Naga City to Siruma is more than six hours, although the same is just 40 km away. It is even longer when the jeepneys get stuck in the muddy gullies and embraced by plating boulders underneath the wheels.

The road's deterioration is worse in Barangays Magsaysay (as Medalla and San Sleeper in Tinambac, where most of the vehicles are stranded for hours.

When jeepneys are unable to ply their route during the rainy season, commuters take the behind-behind motorcycles from Siruma to Tinambac for a P700 fare per person.

Surprisingly, the Department of Public Works and Highways said in its travel advisory last month that the Tinambac-Siruma road, a secondary national road, was "passable but with several conditions or intermittent actions."

Most of the barangay or farm-to-market roads in Siruma are also in bad shape, says Mayor Vitz.

In Tagabe, road along the Sabas-Balayahay road, which connects the coastal village to the interior barangay of Balayahay has massive rock discomfort to residents headed for Naga, especially if the last train PNR, says Marlon L. Oñoda, in barangay chair.

During the rainy season, Sabas becomes isolated as even motorcycles refuse to traverse the dirt road, he says.

In Tonga-Tantagan, according to its barangay chair, Domingo dela Cruz, so much is local funds have been spent in rehabilitate the road only to sweet to its dismal state after the rains come.

"The bad road condition causes an increase in fares. Jeepney operators have to increase the fare or they would get no income from traversing the dirt roads, which have taken toll on the vehicles' engines," says Dela Cruz.

The National Economic and Development Authority considers the Siruma-Tinambac road one of the priority roads to be rehabilitated by the national government. In 2004, P1 million was released through the DPWH for its repair, according to the Bicol Regional Development Council.

No sense of improvements included only to graveling and mud scraping, Mayor Vitz says.

Vitz says that although he and the municipal planning and development officer visited the full rehabilitation and cementing of the road, they were open to repairing only the "critical" portions or those that turn very muddy and slippery when it rains.

The municipal council even came to the point of deciding to allocate money for the repair "although the road ... should be shouldered by the national government since it is a national road," Mandicon says.

"Maybe the reason why the repair of the road is delayed is because our town has a very small voting population that it is the least priority of those who are supposed to take charge of repairing it," he says.

Another reason may be because "our town lies on a dead end," Mandicon says. "No town crosses after us."

Mariano Balito, 69, a resident of Barangay Poblacion in Siruma, says the road's bad state was the reason "progress has eluded" the town.

Siruma is very rich in natural resources, such as white clay and manganese, but Balito, a former miner, says no one would invest because of accessibility problems.

### Slow business

"Businesses are also slow in our town because transporting goods has been difficult," he says.

During the rainy season, store owners take the motorboat instead of jeepneys, and charge higher for their goods because of porters' fees.

Other residents engaged in copra production are also affected, says Pedro. Jeepney drivers charge extra for every sack of copra to be transported in buyers in Tinambac and Naga. This, in turn, cuts the income of copra producers, especially small-time ones, at a time when the buying price of copra is decreasing."

Pedro says the rehabilitation of the Tinambac-Siruma road will open a lot of opportunities for his town. "If we could only physically move our town nearer to the mainland, we would have done it long time ago."

"My only wish before I die is for our road to be paved," he says.

On Feb. 16, a jeepney loaded with books and stationery for pupils was stuck in Barangay Magsaysay in Tinambac. The schoolchildren had to wait until noon of the next day for the learning materials.

THE SIRUMA-TINAMBAC Road of gullies and potholes has long been neglected and has kept the interior north of Naga City remote-bubble.

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GINEBRA

**Liga Pilipinas II: Cebu versus MisOr**

CEBU CITY—DEFENDING NATIONAL CHAMPIONS' CHALLENGE CEBU SEEKing its revenge on its ninth-place standing Iloilo Kilusang Cristiad at 6 p.m. today in the 2009 Chevrolet Liga Pilipinas Conference that Bombo Cebu Olympics Lead-ing Cebu are wagering MVP Warren Bunsis, Bryan Clarito, Stephen Padilla and the newly-improved third Magarao Paraguayan and Bulang Global round at 4 p.m.

Editor Tedoro L. Reyes Jr. • Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

# SPORTS

E-mail to: sports@inquirer.com.ph
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# Favored beach volley teams prevail

By Cedell P. Tupas

JAN BERLIN MALIGSAWAN AND JOSHUA Alcaraz of the Eastern U launched their bid for a third straight Luzon leg title by outleaping National College of Business and Arts' Salvador Tenibol and Marvin Cornes in straight sets at the start of the 12th Penicia Fil Beach Volley National Circuit at the sun-baked Mall of Asia Bay Area.

The Diamond Spikers breezed seven of the first nine points, before earning up the host to win, 21-17, 21-16, in a high noon battle.

With the rookie Alcaraz still adjusting to the playing conditions, the 20-year-old Pagbilaonan, back in the circuit since falling a win short of the national crown two years ago with Anthony Pedregosa, kept the Nationeers afloat against the WCBA pair who upset University of the Philippines' Dominico Ramon Lacbuste and Mark Justin Sagad, 21-20, 27-11, in the first match of the day.

"I'm still adjusting because I'm in need to the indoor game and we only locked up last week," said the 18-year-old Alcarde.

Lamas proved to be the more impressive contingent on the 1 with victories in both divisions. In men's team of Joseph Erickson Ramos and Eden Cardoz outlasted Jan Berlin's Leonel Dion Lampa and Jaime Christian Gonzales, 21-13, 21-15, while the women's pairs of Michelle Jane Carolino and Irene Rosellas Arellano bested De La Salle-Dasmarinas' April Almanzo and Jerald Tia, 21-17, 17-21, 15-6.

In other men's matches, De La Salle-Dasmarinas' Rolando Pajii Jr. and Abraham Abdilla stunned John Mendoza Camposeco and Christopher Brian Arban of Adamson, 21-13, 21-16 while Lyceum-Batangas' Rene Ali and Fernando Andaya, Jr. overwhelmed the La Salle pair of John Rafael Adriano and Philip Cervera, 21-11, 21-13.

University of the East's Claudine Alexa Quiton and Mary Abigail Encander pummeled Baguio-based St. Louis University's Ma. Ai Kilusian Tracilyn and Tamiya Dawn Joseph, 21-11, 21-11, to lead the opening-day winners in the women's side.

Also bowing their openers on day matches were two teams from Baguio, University of the Cordilleras and University of Baguio.

UC's Cindy Benitez and Michelle Ilem thumped UP's Pinduros May Grenido and Jennilyn Barrios, 21-10, 21-12, before the 18th day of October Marcinay and Charmagne Aileen pounced a 21-18, 21-17 victory over BBC-Alabang's Nicole De La Cruz and Jane Villahermosa.

ASHLEE Macaraig of the University of Baguio scrambles for a return against the spikers from the University of the East. JOE CANON

# Just a 'lovers' quarrel,' says PSC chief of tiff with POC

By Marc Anthony Reyes and Christian V. Esguerra

LET'S ALL BE A GOOD SPORT.

That was essentially the sentiment of Philippine Sports Commission chair Harry Angping, who downplayed yesterday the call by Philippine Olympic Committee officials for his ouster as "just a lovers' quarrel."

Angping's comments came after Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita brushed off the POC's appeal to Malacañang to fire the newly appointed sports czar.

"It's not the end of the world, there is still light at the end of the tunnel," said Angping, **adding that negotiations are underway for reconciliatory talks** between him and the POC officials led by president Peping Cojuangco.

Angping said he's confident the POC's executive panel will pass away and that he's only waiting for the POC officials to "cool down and relax" before he sets a meeting with them probably next week.

It's just a "difference in politics" and was never personal in nature, he said.

He said he's willing to have a dialogue with all 14 members of the POC executive council including chair Mendiro Pacmanville, deputy secretary general Mark Joseph and international Olympic Committee representative Frank Elizalde.

The POC cried foul over several policies Angping wanted to implement, including the alleged discrimination of foreign-based Filipino athletes.

"The local Olympic officials and Angping's moves may be construed as government interference in sports and could lead to sanctions from the International Olympic Committee.

Noting that Angping was barely two months into the job, Ermita said the issues raised by the POC were but a "misunderstanding" common in any relationship.

"He is staying as chair of the PSC," he said in a media briefing. "It's not for us to immediately jump into that suggestion. 'Change him!'"

ALASKA forward Joe Devance follows Rain or Shine forward Mike Cortez during their game last night. ALEXIS CELIS

# Crippled sister teams subdue separate foes

GILAS CHAT | Yvonne Carolee Perez
4 p.m.—Be Luis in MR 'N Set

By Musong R. Carillo

ANTIPOLO—ONE HAD NO REINFORCEment; the other had one "spark." Not that it mattered.

Sister teams Barangay Ginebra and San Miguel Beer bucked the absence of key players to warp their PBA Member Pasay Conference on the night's last late night at the Ynares Center.

The Kings turned to import Ifeol Nealy, who barely missed a triple double in guiding the tournament's defending champions to a 113-103 victory over the Coca-Cola Tigers.

Nealy chipped in 42 points, 23 rebounds and nine assists as the Kings showed they could do without top local gunslinger Mark "The Spark" Caguioa, who is expected to miss most of the elimination round while recuperating from injuries to both knees.

"We have no problem with him," coach Jong Uichico said of Nealy, who last the Kings to the quarterfinals of this tournament two years ago. "He works hard, he's a fighter, he's a competitor and he's very coachable."

In the first game, San Miguel Beer came in without its import and some of its key hands and lost three standouts to fouls late in the game but somehow managed to find a way past Alaska, 93-89.

Arwin Villanueva hit his first nine shots in the lab with a career-high 27 points while helping the Beermen break away in the third period.

Gordon Herbosteros, who finished with 13 points, teamed best in the fourth to help the Beermen hold off the Aces' rallies there.

San Miguel found out early two nights ago that Mike Cortez would be able to secure a clearance from the last league he played for in France and find his French feet.

Cortez, named best in the game in his debut with

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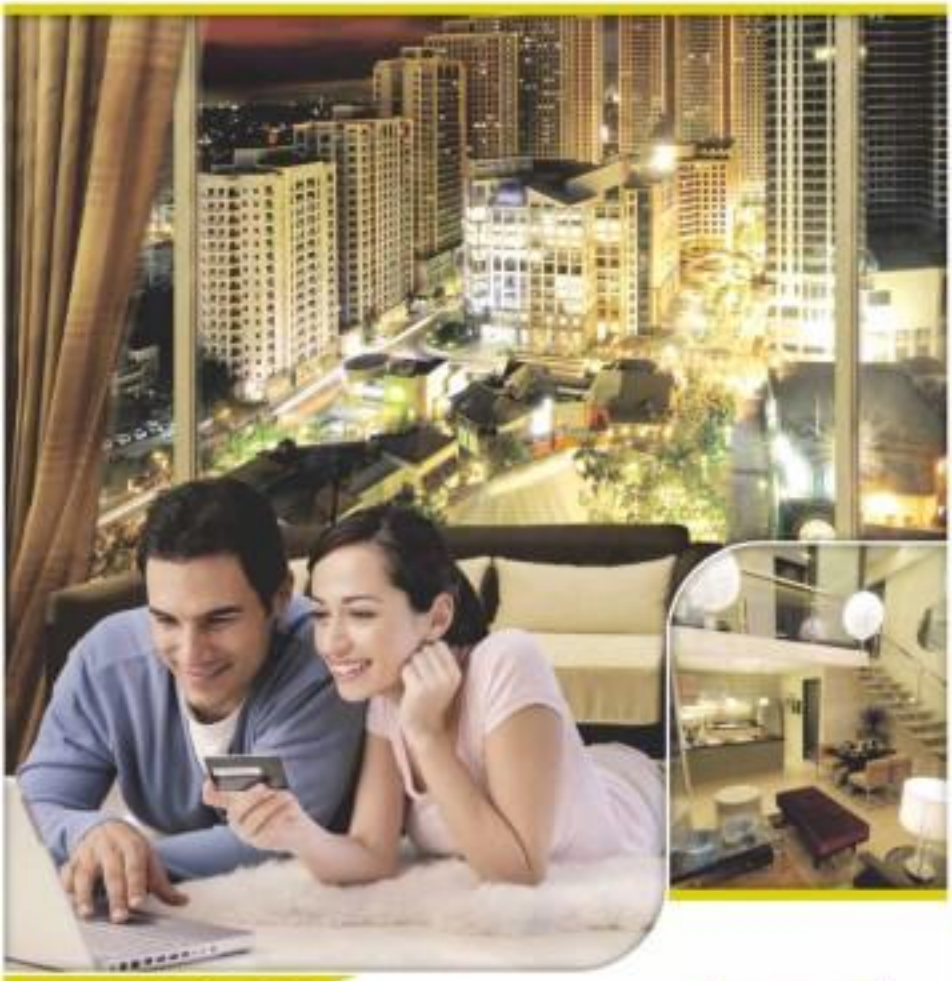

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*Cyril L. Bonoan III, Inquirer Research*

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NEW ATTRACTIONS
Students walk past a florial display in the Riverbank Park in Marikina City. ALVIN BALTAZAR

# Sandigan upholds graft conviction of former Optometry Board member

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE SANDIGANBAYAN HAS upheld the conviction of a former member of the Board of Optometry for taking and passing an exam over which her position had some control more than seven years ago.

In affirming its September 2008 decision finding Dr. Marlyn Collanta-Oliveros guilty of graft, the Sandiganbayan Fourth Division said in a ruling dated Feb. 13 that it found enough evidence of the "existence of intimate and adversarial nexus between her duty in the questions and answer keys (in the exam she took and passed)."

However, one of the five justices who deliberated on the case dissented.

Associate Justice Roland Jurado said that while ordinary optometrists are allowed to take the exams, "there should be no reason to deny the same privilege to the members of the Board, and more so, permit them the ambition of upgrading professionally which will eventually benefit the Filipino people through their quality and reliable service."

Oliveros had filed a motion for reconsideration, maintaining that there was no law prohibiting a board member from taking the special pharmacology examinations, nor was there any law requiring a board member to resign before taking the test.

She said she had inhibited herself from formulating the test questions, from administering the exam and from appreciating and releasing the results.

Oliveros also pointed out that there was an anomaly or irregularity in the examinations which she took in 2002.

However, the antigraft court ruled: "Her claim that she inhibited [herself] from supervising and releasing the results does not absolve her from criminal liability."

The court added that although Oliveros did not formulate the questions, "she personally took the interview sessions to the questions and refused materials to the special pharmacology examination."

The court also pointed out that it was the Integrated Philippine Association of Optometrists which filed the case against her, indicating "the presence of an irregularity."

The court earlier sentenced Oliveros to six to 10 years in prison and disqualified her from holding public office.

# Makati gov't gives gang leaders 'second chance'

## Projects to get them off the streets offered

By Allison W. Lopez

ABOUT 120 GANG LEADERS IN MAKATI WERE BRIEFED yesterday on livelihood programs being offered by the city government to get them off the streets and give them another opportunity to live normal lives.

Makati police chief, Senior Supt. Gilbert Cruz, said the briefing held at City Hall signaled the start of "Project OFF (out of school youth)" aimed at reforming more than 800 youth gang members in the city.

"This is the result of a series of meetings we had after conducting a gang inventory. We felt it was necessary to help these OSY instead of merely ignoring them. It's a second chance for them," he said.

Also present during the meeting were the different department heads and agencies comprising the city's Peace and Order Council.

Cruz said the "soft approach" to send youth gang members was more effective in reducing or eliminating their involvement in incidents of riots, vandalism, petty crimes and drug use.

With the support of Mayor Jejomar Binay, livelihood seminars on food processing, dressmaking, welding and orthodontics will be held alongside sports activities, he added.

A youth camp will also be organized to bring together the 48 gangs in Makati under one roof and "unite them," he said.

In addition, Makati's Department of Education will offer underschool education to those who want to pursue their studies while the city's public employment service office will help them find jobs.

Since many of the gang members do not have proper identification cards, those who attended yesterday's briefing were issued "Makati Youth Identification" ID cards.

Each card bears the gang member's name and affiliation, photo, address and person to be contacted during emergencies.

"I told our officers that if they helped those with PSP cards, all the more they should help those who have them IDs," Cruz said.

National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Leopoldo Bataoil, who graced the event, lauded the initiative of the Makati police and said it should serve as a model for areas dealing with problems arising from youth gangs.

"They are turning bad boys into good boys. I felt the enthusiasm of the gang leaders because they feel they are being given importance. We will continue this advocacy because if you value attention on their lives," he said.

# AUV-riding robbers posing as house hunters strike in QC

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A MAN AND A WOMAN ON BOARD a van robbed a house in Sowthcher, Quezon City, yesterday afternoon, netting P1.7 million in cash and valuables.

The police said the robbers, who were in a blue Mitsubishi Adventure, were approached by roving security guards after they parked their van in front of their victims' home.

The guards, however, went away after the couple told them they were house hunting.

"The suspects told the guards that they were looking for a house for rent and were checking out possibilities in the area," officer-on-case PO1 Emilo Gutierrez said.

He added that the house which was robbed was just a few meters away from the guard house.

Gutierrez said the hapless duo the couple struck in Jordan Plains in Barangay Sto. Monica and were P1.7 million worth of cash, jewelry and appliances.

The homeowners, who asked for anonymity, told the police that no one was at home at the time the robbery occurred... between 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.—because they were at work.

Their children were also in school while both their maids were out on an errand, they added.

Gutierrez said the theft was discovered when the victims' maids came home at around 3 p.m. and found the gate open.

They immediately called the police when they discovered the house in disarray, he added.

"The robbers broke into the house by destroying the main door," the police officer said.

Gutierrez said the suspects apparently monitored the schedule of their victims before they staged the robbery because they knew at what time the house would be left unattended.

# DENR boss clears operator of new San Mateo landfill

By Alcuin Papa

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources (DENR) yesterday said the operator of a new landfill in San Mateo, Rizal, has complied with the terms laid out in the project's environmental compliance certificate (ECC).

In a statement, Environment Secretary Lito Atienza said the was the finding of a team which he tasked to inspect the facility.

"The operator of the landfill has complied with the ECC terms like having completed the lining of the landfill and the construction of a holding pond for the leachate and a water treatment facility," Atienza said.

However, the official of the environmental group Kalikasan-People's Network for Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) disputed the DENR team's findings and challenged Atienza to join them in conducting another inspection of the facility.

Clemencio Bautista, Kalikasan-PNE national coordinator, said a study carried out by their group showed that the lining of the holding pond for the landfill has yet to be completed.

"If the DENR says the landfill is safe, then we will accept that. But we challenge the DENR to conduct another inspection, this time jointly with Kalikasan-PNE and other interested environmental groups," he told the reporters.

Kalikasan-PNE is a member of the Coalition for a Garbage Free San Mateo, a newly formed group which has been opposing the construction of the facility.

The coalition earlier said the project was located in an environmentally critical area since it was linked to the Marikina watershed and claims over the Laguna Lake.

Atienza, however, said the landfill was not located within a watershed area.

According to Bautista, the area has been "reclassified" as a non-watershed area. "Granted that the area is not a watershed area, the landfill is right beside a watershed area anyway. That is still not appropriate. The location should be far from a watershed."

He pointed out that residents in the area should have a say as whether or not the landfill should be allowed to operate.

"Whether the residents agree or not to the existence of the landfill in their area is another issue. And based on our consultation with them, they are opposed to the landfill," he added.

POLICE investigators check the damaged glass window at the Hyundai Showroom in Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

# Grenade blast near Taguig car firm showroom injures maid

By Marlon Ramos

A HOUSEMAID WAS REportedly killed after a grenade exploded near the showroom of a Korean car firm in Taguig City on Tuesday night.

Jane Parreno, 23, was brought to the Makati Medical Center after she was hit by shrapnel on her left leg, Senior Supt. Ezzedin Tiamzon, Taguig police chief, said.

Tiamzon added that Parreno was later released from the hospital after doctors removed the metal pieces of an M62 frag-mentation grenade from her leg.

He said the victim was working the day shift as employees at around 7:15 p.m. when a man on a motorcycle lobbed a grenade at the left side of the Hyundai showroom at the corner of 8th Avenue and 26th Street in Bonifacio Global City.

According to the police chief, the blast destroyed two glass panels of the showroom and damaged a car which was parking by the area.

Although the police have ruled the possibility of a terrorist attack, Tiamzon said that have yet to determine if the car company was the target.

"If the intruders really wanted to destroy the Hyundai showroom, they could have just thrown the grenade in front of the building," he told the Inquirer, adding that the company did not receive any threats before the explosion.

# Cop gunned down in fight with PAF men

By DJ Yap

A POLICEMAN WAS GUNNED down while his companion was wounded in a fight with Philippine Air Force men early yesterday morning in Malabon City.

PO3 Randy Francisco, 32, died in the hospital after he was shot several times while he was trying to intervene in a fight at Sitio Dulo Cielo on General Pascual Street, Barangay Concepcion, police said.

His alleged attackers were identified as Mark Santiago, 26, and Regie Pobre, 28, legal age, both clothed with the 750th Battalion of the Air Force, according to the police report.

Based on the initial probe, the shooting occurred at 1:30 a.m. while the victim and PAF members were drinking with their companions in separate tables.

PO3 Rolel de la Paz, one to investigate, said Pobre, Santiago, who were with Francisco and already got up, approached the PAF men's table and punched Santiago.

In retaliation, Pobre allegedly shot Edora, hitting him on the eyebrow and nose, investigator said. Francisco then intervened and turned himself in upon his effort but was also shot several times.

The victim were rushed to the Tagaytay Bayan ng Malabon where Francisco died. Pobre was moved to another hospital for further treatment.

## METROBRIEFS

### Oops, wrong money

DRIVER OF MR Mao was driving his motorcycle at around 2:45 a.m. yesterday when he hit a passenger jeepney at the corner of Rizal Street and Bantolino Road in Dasmari City. The accident caused both vehicles to overturn and the driver of Mr Mao discovered that he was carrying a huge amount of cash. Police Officer Vilbros, Quezon City Police District Traffic Enforcement Group head, said the money, found in Del Mar's bag, were actually 10 pieces of Argentinian bills, each one valued at one million. However, it turned out that the bills had been devaluated in Argentina and therefore had no value. Yet, the police were amazed when Ray learned that Del Mar tried to use the worthless bills to pay for his treatment at the East Avenue Medical Center where he was taken after the accident. The hospital bill amounted to about P5,000. Rubella said Del Mar would be charged with malicious mischief resulting to slight physical injuries, aside from being required to pay P2,000 for the damage he caused to the passenger jeepney.

Rara C. Crespo

### 'Katulig' project launched

THE MANILA Water Company has launched the "Katulig" program aimed at improving the agency's relations with its customers in Metro Manila's east zone. In a statement, it said the program would allow the water firm to respond to real- time information and ideas directly from its customers which would be used to make service delivery more efficient and effective in the areas covered. During the launch, Manila Water chief executive officer Gerardo Ablaza Jr. challenged employees to be more proactive in addressing customers' concerns involving, among others, billing inquiries to appliance service and sanitation services.

A "KATULIG" employee at work

### Puno Memorial Lecture set

THE JENSEN'S of the East and the JK Foundation for Research and Advancement Studies Inc. (JK Foundation) will hold a roundtable discussion on "Poverty Alleviation: How Can I Help?", the second part of the Lucio Tan-Jesus G. Puno Memorial Lecture Series, on March 8 at 2 p.m. at the JK Manila Conference Hall. The memorial lecture was established to honor the memory and legacy of Chief Justice Jesus Lucio Tan G. Puno, a distinguished UE alumnus. For inquiries, contact the JK Foundation at 7350411 locals 6481 and 6421 or log on to www.ue.edu.ph.

# They have one thing in common

IT'S ONLY NATURAL FOR MOST women, the President's husband, to come to the defense of embattled Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez, even facing an impeachment complaint with the House of Representatives.

"She's just doing her job, just for her sister, leave her alone," said Arroyo.

The impeachment complaint against Gutierrez stems from her ruling on criminal cases in which Arroyo's friends are involved or for herself in legal cases.

Then doing her job" means defending the interests of lawyers who recommended Gutierrez for her post.

Scott Ateneo and Garlyn Lee have something in common, aside from their being graduates from the Ateneo de Manila College of Law in the same year. You can find that out for yourself from Bar Officer of the Bar Confidant of the Supreme Court.

No wonder Gutierrez answers her critics the way she does. No wonder Arroyo thinks the way he does.

Fellow spokesperson Cerge Remonde said Malacañang has adopted a "hands-off" policy on Gutierrez impeachment.

The President's allies in the House of Representatives, Remonde said, will not be asked to support her or vote down the impeachment complaint against her.

Aw, c'mon, Cerge, tell that to the Marines!

If Miss Arroyo has come to Gutierrez's defense, you think she'll come to the defense of the President, his backers, will leave him to fight the battle alone?

When are they husband and wife for, anyway?

The quarrel between Senator Rick Gordon and wife Peter Cayetano over the Fort Bonifacio turf war would not have taken place had one respected the other.

Gordon has recommended the filing of plunder and other criminal charges against former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocjoc Bolante and nine others.

Although Gordon is the report put some of the blame on the President, citing executive responsibility to respect those that Cayetano, whom Gordon regarded as his ally-turned-rival and snubbed for questioning a colleague's decisions.

The present composition of the Senate will go down in history as one where its members insult one another publicly.

So what if Atty. Gen. Agnes Rangel, who was given a hard time in the Commission on Appointments for her Pacific Lumber no for promotion to lieutenant general, is a Palace favorite? Rangel deserves the promotion.

I came to know Rangel when he was chief of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) during the early '80s. I regularly visited the Palace as friends of the dozen.

I found him to be very professional and very much loved by his men. He's very good material for Armed Forces chief of staff.

I remember how Lacson retorted to the report yesterday that his former aide at the defunct Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force has named the same people as members of publicist Bobby Reyes and his driver Emmanuel Godinez!

Former Senior Supt. Glenn Meneses filed an affidavit on Feb. 11 to the UN revealing everything he knew about the double murders.

My source at the Supreme Court told me the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) has approved the appointment of Cebuano City Regional Trial Court Judge Jaime Ocampo Agustin to the Court of Appeals.

If the latest, the JBC members did a lousy disturbing job. Don't they know Angeles has been convicted of child abuse? Plus, she has three different cases against her at the Sandiganbayan. Besides, she's retiring on May 26, 2010, a little over a year away.


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# Ruby Chan: 43

RUBY LISTANA CHAN OF Dasma Park Village, Cainta, Rizal, died yesterday after a lingering illness.

She was 43.

She is survived by her husband, Engr. Eduardo H. Chan, and daughter Alexis Rachel.

Her cremation for at the Cainta Lady of Fatima Parish Church in Dasma Park Village, Cainta, Rizal.

The date of interment will be announced later.

In lieu of flowers, the Chan family is requesting cash donations.

A portion of the amount collected will be used some of the parish church which is undergoing renovation.

LIVELIHOOD FOR WOMEN

The women legislators of the 14th Congress headed by Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar (center) observed the celebration of Women's Month in Congress with an exhibit of income-generating projects. Villar, shown with Pasay councilors Lorna Silverio, Rumbol Villaroza, Aiko Durusapa, and Luisa Maza, shows how to operate the bandstone handloom weaving in Las Piñas, which Villar initiated, is now gaining a reputation as an added livelihood activity for women in the city.

# 'Strong' genocide case against Sudan leader

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS—The International Criminal Court (ICC) is set to announce on Wednesday whether it will issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of masterminding genocide in Darfur—amid fears it could provoke a violent backlash.

The chief prosecutor said dozens of witnesses would testify that al-Bashir controlled a genocidal campaign aimed at wiping out three ethnic African tribes in the vast nation south of Egypt.

"We have strong evidence against Mr Bashir," prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo said on Tuesday."More than 30 witnesses will (testify) here he managed to control everything and we have strong evidence of his motivation."

An arrest warrant for al-Bashir would be a milestone for the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal, which started work in 2002 and has never before ordered the arrest of a sitting head of state.

Such an arrest warrant would also put al-Bashir alongside former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and ex-Liberian leader Charles Taylor as heads of state indicted for war crimes while in office. Both of Milosevic and Taylor were forced from power and ended up on trial at international tribunals in The Hague.

Dozens of Darfuris were planning to gather on Wednesday outside the court in memory of victims of the conflict, said Hava Troutzel, a spokesperson for several Darfur groups involved in the action. Similar gatherings were planned in London, Rome and Brussels.

"They will fight some conflict and send a list of names," Troutzel said. "It will be an impromptu memorial."

In a show of defiance on Tuesday, al-Bashir danced for cheering supporters at a rally in northern Sudan. An effigy of Moreno-Ocampo was torched.

"They will issue their decision tomorrow, and we are telling them to intervene it to water and drink it," al-Bashir said, using a common Arabic insult meant to show extreme disrespect.

The war in Darfur began in 2003, when rebels from African groups, complaining of discrimination and neglect, took up arms against the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum. UN officials say up to 300,000 people have died and 2.7 million have fled their homes.

In 2005, the Security Council asked Moreno Ocampo to investigate crimes in Sudan's western Darfur region.

Sudan and its allies in the 40-nat. Union and Arab League have lobbied the Security Council to postpone the case by a year as UN and regional efforts to end the six-year conflict continue. But disagreement among veto-wielding members makes that unlikely.

The United States, France and Britain oppose a delay. Russia and China, which has strong economic ties with Sudan, would likely support one, esp. oil-diplomats said.

"Certainly, the council is still divided on this issue," Libya's UN Ambassador Ibrahim Dabbashi, who is the current council president, told a news conference on Tuesday. "There is nothing scheduled by the council as an immediate reaction to the decision of the ICC."

Moreno Ocampo has asked for arrest warrants on 10 charges, including genocide, murder, torture, extermination and rape.

He said Sudanese troops and the Janjaweed Arab militia they support murdered civilians and continued to prey on them in refugee camps. He said the militia had engaged also in a campaign of rape to drive women into the desert where they were expected to die of starvation.

Even if a warrant is issued, questions remain over who would arrest al-Bashir, who retired power in a coup nearly 20 years ago. AP

## Afghan tech boom: Even mullah has iPhone

KABUL—MULLAH ABDUL Salaam Zaeef is a former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan. He spent almost four years in Guantanamo. He wears a black turban, has a thick beard—and is never without his Apple iPhone.

The ultraconservative Taliban banned modern technology like the Internet and TV during its harsh 1996-2001 rule, but those items have boomed in Afghanistan since the regime's 2001 ouster, helping to bring the country into the 21st century.

Zaeef, who reconciled with the Afghan government after being released from US custody, said he used his iPhone to surf the Internet and find different locations, emphasizing the built-in GPS. He even checks his bank account balance online.

"It's easy and modern and I love it," Zaeef said as he finished playing a game, across the iPhone's touch screen less week. "This is necessary in the world today. People want to progress."

Beyond dusting his cares, some say the country's embrace of technology could help break the cycle of 30 years of education warfare. It gave rise the tip of a larger many things that were strictly outlawed by Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar—music, movies, pictures of people and games like chess.

Mohammad Nabi Omari, the world differently from older Afghans because of their use of the Internet and mobile phones, and their participation in sports, said Shakila Rasuli, a female lawmaker and Internet newspaper editor.

Afghanistan's youth are not outside up to "the old mode of war," she said. "They are engaging with the rest of the world. That's why technology is so important for Afghanistan." AP

MOURNERS express their outrage over the attack on Sri Lanka's cricket team, which killed six policemen who were guarding the players. AFP/GETTY

## Pakistan nabs suspects in Sri Lanka team attack

LAHORE, PAKISTAN—POLICE detained several suspects connected to the attack on Sri Lanka's cricket team in Pakistan, but said on Wednesday they had made no progress in cracking down the gunmen that wounded seven players and killed six police guarding them.

Senior police official Nasir Habib-ur-Rehman said police raided locations in Lahore and surrounding districts and arrested "some suspects." He gave no details of their alleged roles, or the precise number detained, but said some were picked up at a Lahore hostel, where bloodstained clothes were also found after Tuesday's attack.

"We are after them, and we hope that God willing, we will soon get a result," Rehman told Pakistan. The bus sped through the ambush and crashed the safety of the stadium.

Besides the six police officers, a driver of a vehicle in the convoy was also killed. Seven Sri Lanka players, a Pakistani umpire and a coach from Britain were wounded, some with life-threatening injuries.

"Our guys were getting hurt and screaming, but we couldn't help each other," Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene said when the team arrived home in Colombo early Wednesday. None of us thought that we would come alive out of that situation."

Veteran Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan spoke of the chaos on the bus during the attack.

"All the while bullets were being sprayed at our bus, people around us were shouting," he said. "I am glad to be back."

But Jayawardene added that growing up in Sri Lanka, which has seen scores of suicide attacks related to the country's civil war, meant the players had a "natural instinct" that made them immediately hit the floor at the first sound of gunfire.

"We are used to hearing, seeing these things. Firing, bombings. So we ducked under our seats when the firing began," Jayawardene told reporters.

The attack ended Pakistan's hopes of hosting international cricket teams—or any high-profile sports events—for months, if not years. Even before Tuesday, most squads chose not to tour the cricket-obsessed country for security reasons. AP

## Opposition leader won't step down amid scandal

TOKYO—JAPAN'S OPPOSITION leader suggested the arrest of one of his aides was politically motivated and said he would not quit despite the blow to his party's efforts to topple the unpopular prime minister.

The arrest of Hiroshi Ishi is a disaster scandal—one seen as a major setback to Japan's largest opposition party, which is surging in popularity polls and is seen by experts as being in position to oust the country's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party in the next general election. The Liberal Democrats have ruled Japan for most of the past 50 years.

Ichiro Ozawa, the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan and a top contender in several House elections, "have done, said no one's been broken.

"I have nothing to feel guilty about," Ozawa said at a news conference a day after the arrest of Takanori Okubo on suspicion of violating regulations on political funding.

Ozawa said Tuesday's raid of his office office by prosecutors might be politically motivated, as similar searches have been done by Dept. Jr. Prosecutors on Wednesday also searched the home of Okubo's father in northern Iwate prefecture (state).

"The unprecedented probe came as we are in the midst of heading toward the three house polls. I feel this to an extension of power exerted by such authorities as politically and legally within statutes," Ozawa said.

Tokyo prosecutors allege that Ozawa's political funding organization, Rikouzankai, received 21 million yen ($210,000) in illegal contributions from 2003 to 2004 from two political organizations headed by finance executives at the scandal-tainted construction firm Nishimatsu Construction Co. Ltd.

The two executives were also accused of funding on suspicion they used their corporations to funnel money to finance donations, which is banned under Japanese political funding laws. AP

## WORLDBRIEFS

### Madoff to give up property, art, tickets

NEW YORK—Bernard Madoff has agreed to give up the rights to his disgraced investment business and his company's prized artwork and entertainment tickets, as an official for an organization providing relief to investors said on Tuesday that restitution checks may be in the mail this month. The agreement governing the liquidation of Madoff's business made the former investment manager was surrendering ownership rights to his business, Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC, along with the company's artwork and entertainment tickets. The trustee, Irving Picard, did not specify the value of the property or say what kinds of tickets and artwork Madoff possessed. AP

### Buddhist stole antique statue 'to pray'

TOKYO—A Japanese man whose home was found packed with Buddhist statues told police he had stolen some of the temples in the ancient capital of Kyoto so he could pray to them, according to local media. Police found 21 statues of Buddha in the house of the 59-year-old man after he was arrested on suspicion of stealing a wooden Buddha figure from a temple in Kyoto. Reuters

### Aging nation cuts cost of 100th birthday gifts

TOKYO—Japan now has so many people over 100 that it is cutting costs by reducing the birthday gift it presents its centenarians to a mere cash that age. Last year, a total of 15,359 people reached triple figures in the world's most rapidly aging country, compared with only 153 in 1963, the year when the cash-sum first presented. Reuters

### Distracted kids become gamblers?

TORONTO—Children raised as impulsive by their kindergarten teachers appear more likely to begin gambling behaviors like playing cards or betting on sports by the time they're in their mid-teens, Canadian researchers said on Monday. The study in the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine is the first to show gambling among children in the young, said Linda Pagani, who led the study at Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center and Université de Montréal. Reuters

## Bangladesh police question suspected mutiny leader

DHAKA, BANGLADESH—A BANGLADESHI court ruled on Wednesday that police would hold and interrogate the suspected leader of a deadly border guard rebellion that killed at least 74, as officials said a day after the suspect was arrested with four other guards.

Judge Abdur Rahim and police could keep Syed Touhidul Alam and four other suspects in custody for seven days for questioning on charges of murder, arson and looting.

Police arrested the five men in a Dhaka slum on Tuesday.

The Army spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Eliul Hasan, said the arrests increased another body on Wednesday, raising the two-day mutiny's death toll to 76. At least 55 army officers and others were among the people killed, and five Army officers were still missing, he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who came to power two months ago, told supporters on Tuesday night that the attack proved there was "a conspiracy" against her government. She has suggested the mutinous border guards had outside help, but has not said who the suspects.

"We must remain alert, so no one can take away the rights of the people," Hasina said.

Bangladesh's government has requested assistance from the United States and the FBI in the investigation. The FBI is considering the request.

The Army continued to search for more than 1,000 border guards who fled after last week's mutiny at their headquarters in Dhaka, to which the guards surrendered their commanding officers on Feb. 25.

Panelled military and civilian investigations were launched on Tuesday. Military investigators interrogated hundreds of border guards and searched surrounded officers and bloodstained streets at the guards' compound. The guards superior officers are mostly drawn from the Army.

Police paraded suspected ringleader Alam and four other suspects before reporters on Tuesday night. Television footage showed them, dressed in sarongs and flip flops, slumped and limping before the cameras.

The guards say they revolted over long-standing demands for parity in pay and other perks enjoyed by Army officers, who command their border forces.

During the meeting, Alam emerged as the loud organization with Hasina's office, setting an offer of amnesty in exchange for surrendering. Hasina later reminded the officers those directly responsible for the killings, which included Alam, police said.

Hasina's government has also moved to damage relations between the impoverished country's civilian and military leadership, shifting the balance of power toward the Army. AP

POLICE present in the media five suspects in the two-day Dhaka mutiny of border guards, in which scores of Army officers and their wives were killed.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirico

# Obama: 1st quarter holds little promise

NEW YORK—US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA forecast a dismal first quarter for the economy as data showed US auto sales fell 40 percent in February and sales of previously existing homes in January tumbled to a record low.

But Obama vowed economic upheld office meeting with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on Tuesday, saying credit would flow again, and he promised 10 weeks as a good beginning but...

Brown came to Washington calling for a "global New Deal" to stimulate the world economy, as very much Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke, who said even more bold steps were needed to prevent a costly recession.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner stood firmly behind his forecast for recovery in 2011, at which time the US government will need to reduce budget deficits once the stimulative spending taps down its role.

"The economy's performance in the last quarter of 2008 was the worst in over 25 years. And frankly the first quarter of this year holds out little promise for better returns," Obama said in remarks.

The latest US auto sales data showed the 15th consecutive monthly drop, with sales off more than 40 percent in February to the lowest level in almost three decades.

The downbeat housing sales reversed the prior month's gains.

Obama's short-term outlook coincided with others from the OECD group of developed economies, which warned that world trades fell even more rapidly than had been thought just over a month ago, and the International Monetary Fund, which may cut its global 2009 growth forecast.

"The recession will deepen ... there's no doubt ... I think this quarter will be the worst quarter of all," Klaus Schwab-Hubbel, chief economist for the OECD, told Reuters.

Even so, Obama said he was "absolutely confident that credit is going to be flowing again" and called US stocks a "potentially good deal" based on price-to-earnings ratios.

But US stocks, despite a brief bounce on Obama's comments, extended their losses, unable to sustain an early rise that had lowered the 12-year lows hit on Monday. The S&P 500 closed below 700 points for the first time since October 1996.

AT THE ROSE GARDEN. US President Barack Obama (left) and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown exchange views on the not-so-rosy prospects of the global economy on their way to a working lunch at the White House. AP

In Europe, the FTSEurofirst 300 stock index fell 1.6 percent to its lowest close since the index's inception in July 1997.

Brown's visit to Obama is the first by a European head of government since Obama took office on Jan. 20. The British leader was expected to press Obama for details on Wednesday on a plan for fixing the US financial sector.

"This is a global problem. It needs global solutions," Brown told National Public Radio in an interview, invoking US President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies during the Great Depression in the 1930s.

The European Union is seeking to reverse tax cuts in the US that have prevented it from reaching a comprehensive bailout for Central and Eastern Europe, where countries banks have lent an estimated $1.7 trillion.

The Bank of Canada cut its main interest rate by a half point to a record low of 0.5 percent, as had been expected, and signaled that it may take extra steps to pump money into a system that remains stubbornly short of credit.

Earlier, Australia's central bank held its interest rate steady at 3.25 percent, defying expectations of a cut. The bank said stimulus already under way was helping the country avoid the depths of recession rival elsewhere. Japan also took aim at fresh data on unemployment on Tuesday, saying it would lend $5 trillion from its hefty foreign reserves to a state-backed bank charged with channeling funds to firms in trouble. Reuters

## Australia's economy shrinks, heads for recession

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMY shrank 0.5 percent in the last quarter of 2008, the government said on Wednesday in an unexpected announcement that suggested the country may be entering a recession.

The news of the economy's first contraction in eight years surprised economists who had expected the Australian Bureau of Statistics to report a slight increase in gross domestic product (GDP).

But the bureau said GDP fell by 0.5 percent in the last quarter in seasonally adjusted terms.

Australia is not yet in a recession—technically two consecutive quarters of contraction—because a surprise rise of 0.1 percent was reported in the third quarter.

Growth slowed to just 0.3 percent for the year, and broking firm quickly Australia's resource-based economy has slumped since the US financial crisis took storm around the globe in the middle of last year.

The stock market immediately dropped and the dollar fell but government officials tried to put a positive gloss on the numbers, saying that Australia was still doing better than many rivals.

"The economy did contract in the December quarter, but by far less than other developed economies," Treasurer Wayne Swan told a news conference. "This is a sobering but not surprising outcome because I think it does illustrate the full impact of the magnitude of the global economic and financial [crisis] on this country." AP

UBS has announced that former Swiss President Kaspar Villiger (above) will replace Peter Kurer (inset) as chair of the board next month in an attempt to bring the bank back to profitability and deal with a major US tax evasion probe. AP

## UBS exec faces Senate probe of assets hidden by Americans

WASHINGTON—AN OFFICIAL OF UBS AG on Wednesday will face questions from a Senate panel for the first time on Switzerland's biggest bank, formally acknowledged responsibility for helping tens of thousands of American clients hide assets from the US government.

In a cross-border battle, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the government's tax collection agency is trying to pry from UBS the names of its more or $2,000 wealthy Americans who maintain secret accounts with UBS. The bank maintains that turning over the account names would violate Swiss privacy law and jeopardize UBS' license to stay in business.

The Swiss government—which is providing financial support to UBS as it struggles with massive losses stemming from the US subprime mortgage crisis—has refused to send a representative to Wednesday's Senate subcommittee hearing, in protest of the IRS lawsuit against the bank.

Cloak-and-dagger tactics used by the Ubs government to have been employed by UBS—coded language in internal e-mails and messages, shell companies and phony charitable trusts, use of pay phones and foreign area codes and credit cards—will be on display at the hearing.

IRS allegedly staged training sessions on their "client advisers" would travel frequently to the United States—on average of 50 days a year, each—to consult with current US customers, without alerting the investigators of tax agents or law enforcement officials.

The advisers were told to retain the hotels they stayed in and to "protect the banking secrecy." If they were questioned by any authorities, according to excerpts of UBS internal documents filed in other IRS suits and provided by the subcommittee.

The disputes has prompted heated debate in Switzerland over the country's cherished banking secrecy, a tradition that has helped transform the nation into one of the world's richest. AP

IN THIS ISSUE

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■ DBS sees slower inflation for RP /B4

Editor Raul G. Manalo ■ Business Editor Corrie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

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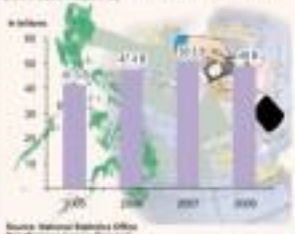
INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

**Exports down (2005-2008, in US dollars)**

after posting increases in 2006 and 2007, total exports for 2008 were driven by declines (-) in petroleum products (-30.5 percent) and machinery (-6.3 percent). Exports posted an increase of 10 percent and nearly 7 percent in 2006 and 2007, respectively




Source: National Statistics Office
Ruth Francisco-Inquirer Research

# Gov't plans to offer 38 exploration contracts

## Deals also cover field development and production of coal, oil, steam

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY PLANS TO OFFER TO INvestors at least 29 contracts for the exploration and development of prospective coal areas in various parts of the country, a senior government official said.

At the sidelines of the Earth Hour briefing yesterday, Energy Undersecretary Rafael Diu said most of these contracts covered potential coal areas in Mindanao, although some were in the Quezon province and Cebu.

Diu said the government was also planning to offer initially six areas for petroleum exploration, development and production—all of which would be offshore.

For the geothermal sector, the DOE has identified three or four areas for exploration, development and direct utilization for power generation and other geothermal applications.

"Most [two or three would be in Luzon, and two in Mindanao," Diu said.

The Philippines is the world's second biggest geothermal power producer with a total installed capacity of 1,931 megawatts.

Diu said, however, that all these new areas for exploration and development were still under evaluation. For geothermal, for instance, the government is still determining how many areas will be offered to prospective investors.

He said the government was confident that new investors would come in—whether foreign or Filipino—to bid for these contract areas.

In a related development, Diu said the DOE would issue next week the new guidelines for the submission of proposals for service contracts for coal, petroleum and geothermal projects. These guidelines will be published soon in major newspapers and will take effect 15 days after.

Earlier, Diu said the DOE was scheduled to award 10 coal contracts this year. The first contract would be awarded to Unoa Coal Development Corp. for its coal exploration venture in Semirara.

Last year, the DOE awarded only four coal operating contracts covering areas in Cebu, Negros Oriental and Davao del Norte and Zamboanga Sibugay. These COCs were awarded to R. Roy C. Coal Mining and Exploration Corp., Gaisano Management Corp., PHOC Exploration Corp. and Agusan Petroleum and Mining Corp.

Data from the DOE showed that potential investments in the exploration and development of indigenous coal from 2005 to 2014 were estimated to reach P142.3 billion.

Of the amount, P45.6 billion would be used to develop potential areas in Luzon, P77.4 billion for Visayas and P19.2 billion for Mindanao.

## Semiconductor firms face bleak prospects

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GLOBAL PERSONAL COMputer industry faces its steepest decline yet, with shipments expected to decrease 11.8 percent to 257 million units this year from 2008 level, according to research firm Gartner.

"The PC industry is facing extraordinary conditions. As the global economy continues to weaken, users stretch PC lifetimes and PC suppliers grow increasingly cautious," Gartner research director George Shiffler said in a statement.

The semiconductor industry is already feeling the pinch, with **worldwide sales in January falling** 28.6 percent to $15.3 billion, according to data from the Semiconductor Industry Association.

"Worldwide semiconductor sales in January, historically a relatively weak month for the industry, reflected a continuing erosion of consumer confidence and the effects of the global economic recession," SIA president George Scalise said in a separate statement.

"Sales declined across the entire range of semiconductor products, as sales of [upcoming] **SEMICONDUCTOR** /B3

## Increase in BSP rediscounting facility budget eyed

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPpinas said it was willing to raise further its P68-billion budget for rediscounting if needed.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the central bank's allocated budget for lending to banks through the rediscounting facility could be flexible.

"We will assess the [sufficiency] of the P68 billion and determine if there is a need to increase it," Tetangco said.

Under the BSP's rediscounting facility, banks may borrow from the central bank an amount equivalent to a rediscounted value of the collectible or debt instrument used to back the borrowing. It is intended to help ensure that banks have available funds for lending even when their collectibles have yet to fall due or to be settled.

On March 2, the BSP's budget for rediscounting was raised to P60 billion from only P40 billion to accommodate more banks that would be in need of immediate liquidity.

The hike was one of the several re-discounting-related measures implemented by the BSP since March 2 to help ensure the system remains liquid. The BSP said these measures were aimed at preventing credit tightening in the country in the light of the credit crunch now crippling the United States and other advanced economies.

Another rediscounting-related measure implemented was the easing of a limit on the amount a bank may borrow through the BSP rediscounting window. The central bank said a bank could borrow only up to 5% billion or 25 percent of its net worth, whichever is lower.

The BSP said this would ensure that the rediscounting facility would benefit as many banks as possible.

"We don't want the funds to be concentrated on a few banks," Tetangco said.

There are, however, proposals for the lifting of the ceiling.

Omar Byron Mier, president and chief executive officer of Philippine National Bank, earlier said limiting the amount banks could borrow from the rediscounting facility can counter efforts to ensure sufficient liquidity in the system.

Mier said the ceiling should be lifted to prevent bank lending.

Also, the BSP has changed the way it determines the interest rate it charges under the rediscounting facility.

The BSP now sets the rediscounting interest rate at 50 basis points below the current bank's overnight borrowing rate, which now stands at 5 percent. A cut to the BSP's overnight borrowing rate, which the market expects this week, is seen to pull down the cost of borrowing from the rediscounting facility.

Previously, the interest rate charged by the BSP was 50 basis

**BUSINESS** /B2

### CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 48.78 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., March 4, 2009

₱ 99.10 = ¥ 1
As of 5 p.m., March 4, 2009

### STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(See stock market report on Page B2)

**Shares up 1.4%**

10 MARES ROSE 1.4 PERCENT YESTERday due to selective buying of key blue chips, dealers said.

The composite index gained 23.84 points to 1,885.92 points while the all-shares index added 8.8 percent to 1,212.44 points.

There were 37 gainers against 48 losers while 26 issues were unchanged.

Volume amounted to 611.8 million shares worth ₱1.94 billion.

The peso traded at 48.85 to the dollar.

"This is on individual news," over-specific companies, said Jing Cabiso of ATR and A Securities Inc.

Cabiso cited the case of Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), which was reported to be the target of a takeover attempt by food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

She also pointed to Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) which announcement Tuesday that its core profit—which excludes extraordinary and other charges—rose 8 percent in 2008.

"Most of the [options] are due to the blue chips' announcement of positive earnings," Cabiso said.

Meralco gained 2.73 percent to P82 while PLDT rose 4.1 percent to P2,315.

PLDT subsidiary Philippine Telegraph Corp. gained 1.36 percent to P1,50.

San Miguel Corp. was its A and B shares fell 3.33 percent to P45.50. AFP

TOYOTA
moving forward

# Faster foreclosures sought

## Thrift banks to propose law

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE BANKS RECORDING fresh legislative homage to thrashing on the real estate collateral of delinquent borrowers in five up more funds for rebanding as the global financial turmoil persists.

In a press briefing yesterday, Chamber of Thrift Banks president Pascual M. Garcia III said the association would spearhead a new proposal to Congress to enact a new law on foreclosure proceedings. He said the association has started talking to some lawmakers for potential sponsorship of such bill, which he said would be crucial not only for thrift banks but also for the entire banking system, given the worsening global credit crunch.

The briefing yesterday was held ahead of the CTBA annual national convention Friday next week, for which the 59-member umbrella organization adopted the theme: "Thrift Banks' Moving Forward in 2009 Through Responsive, Responsible Banking."

Garcia, who is also president of Philippine Savings Bank, noted that a new law rationalizing the foreclosure proceedings by banks—which currently takes as long as 10 years to complete—would allow banks to speed up efforts to dispose of bad assets now that the Special Purpose Asset Vehicle Law has lapsed.

"A major portion of the bad assets can't be disposed [of] because of the drawn foreclosure process," Garcia said.

Alredo Ibe, president of Philippine Business Bank and immediate past CTB president, added that if banks could unlock values from foreclosed asset faster, they would also be able to lower lending rates for businesses, thereby helping perk up the domestic economy.

In the past, the commercial banking sector unlocked bad assets by bulk using the SPV framework—which provides fiscal incentives for the transfer of assets. Very few thrift banks, however, were able to relieve bad assets using the SPV framework due to the large volume requirement of the asset management companies' (sacs) buying the assets.

But Garcia said the country's thrift banks, via individual property auctions, had nevertheless been able to nearly halve their stock of foreclosed property assets as a ratio of total assets over the last five years.

Based on Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas data, the thrift bank industry had P28.3 billion worth of real and other properties acquired (Repos) equivalent to 28.3 percent of total assets as of end-September last year.

Garcia said the proposed new legislation would be a significant catalyst for the banking system given the huge additional expense incurred by banks in handling foreclosed assets. Aside from the costly provisions given the 150-percent risk weight slapped on those assets, he said it's very expensive (estimated to be at least P150,000 per unit, in artist) in the Philippines to foreclose on properties and on collaterals in the first place.

# PLDT eyes local loans

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Larson

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Co. (PLDT), the country's dominant phone service group, is eyeing the local debt market to refinance over $300 million in maturing obligations this year, a banking official said.

PLDT treasurer Anabelle Chua said the company may take advantage of the peso debt markets due to its present liquidity.

"There are various initiatives we have been pursuing with respect to tapping the local [debt] market, given that there is available liquidity," Chua said.

"We have more than $500 million [in] debt maturities this year and we are replacing [old] debt with new debt," Chua added.

The peso debt market has been liquid and resilient despite the economic downturn prompting several conglomerates to turn to this market to help fund their corporate plans.

PLDT's consolidated debt stood at $1.6 billion as of Dec. 31, 2008, with net debt at approximately $800 million. Debt maturities spread out with the bulk of debt repayments due in 2013 and beyond.

PLDT earlier announced it had raised 9% billion in fresh debt via a private placement last Feb. 26, which will be used to finance capital expenditures.

The debt came in the form of 5-, 7- and 10-year fixed rate notes arranged by First Metro Investment Corp., the investment banking arm of the Metrobank Group.

Due to strong demand from investors for the debt offer, PLDT decided to raise the issue amount to P9 billion from the original target of P5 billion.

The 17 participating lenders were a mix of leading insurance companies, large local commercial, trust and savings banks, and investment and provident funds.

FMIC was the sole arranger for the deal.

PLDT's subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. also raised P5 billion from a notes issue last December.

In another development, PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan also said PLDT is eyeing possible telco acquisitions in the region such as in India.

# BDO income drops

By Doris C. Dumlao

EARNINGS OF BANCO de Oro Unibank owned by retail tycoon Henry Sy fell by 66 percent to P12 billion in 2008 as the country's largest bank took a hit from several investments at Lehman Brothers, which collapsed due to the turbulent global environment.

China Banking Corp., which is also owned by the Sy family, separately reported yesterday a net income of P12.92 billion for 2008, 29.76 percent lower than a year ago due to the industry-wide slump in treasury earnings triggered by the US subprime crisis.

In a statement, BDO said its underlying business continued to be strong, as loans, deposits, net interest income and service-based fee income registered all-over-a-year ago.

"The bank's balance sheet and capital remained robust, allowing it to absorb the impact stemming from the global financial crisis," the bank said.

BDO last year put up loan provisions for about P1.91 billion worth of exposure to investments/security investment bank Lehman Brothers, which went bankrupt last September.

Capital stood at P37.8 billion, with capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at 14 percent of risk assets. "BDO has already taken appropriate steps to improve the coverage of its assets," the bank said.

Net interest income improved 7 percent to P23 billion with a higher earning asset base, while fee-based and other income was flat at P9.2 billion.

Other income loans expanded 32 percent to P595.8 billion, driven by broad-based demand from the corporate, middle market and consumer lending segments.

Despite the general stagnation in Cebuanan, overall asset quality improved in the nonperforming loan ratio declined to 4 percent from 5.2 percent in 2007.

Separately, China Bank said its total revenues grew by 5.31 percent to P16.16 billion. Interest revenues from loans, which grew by 18 percent, offset the decline in investment from nonrecurring activities.

Growth in total operating expenses was contained at 3.69 percent, reaching P5.16 billion.

China Bank president Peter Dee said: "We expected, the net balance had an impact on the bank but I am happy to report that China Bank's financial strength and stability built over the years enabled it to withstand the effects of the crisis. After ten years of record earnings, China Bank remains solid and well-equipped to cope with a period of market troubles."

Capital funds amounted to P25.48 billion, translating to a capital adequacy ratio of 15.46 percent, still one of the strongest in the industry.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# DOE expects surge in clean energy projects

## Governing rules up by June

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY expects more groups to invest in the country's renewable energy sector following the approval of the rules and regulations (IRR) governing the Renewable Energy Act of 2008.

"We want to complete the IRR by June so we can implement projects," said Mario Marasigan, DOE energy utilization and management bureau director.

According to Marasigan, the rural areas of socioeconomic need be the wind, hydro and biomass power sectors that have drawn significant investor interest.

Investors are eyeing southern and central Luzon and Visayas for wind projects, biomass projects, and central Luzon and Visayas for biomass.

Marasigan said the firms that had sent letters of interest to the DOE or had visited the department included Global Green Power; Arthaan Energy, Emp Group, Hexact Philippines and Agus Corp.

Other companies are also looking at hydropower projects in Cagayan, Pangasinan and Quezon, he added.

Marasigan said a number of investors are participating in the completion of the IRR.

"They want to make sure that they have the same understanding with the government on the provisions of the [Renewable Energy] law," he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo signed in December last year the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, a landmark legislation that took almost two decades to complete.

The RE Law is expected to spur investments in renewable energy sector because of incentives such as zero percent import tariff duties and zero-rated value-added tax for the importation of machinery and equipment for the first 10 years of an operating contract, tax credits on domestic capital equipment and services and a seven-year income tax holiday.

# Attack of the clowns

RIGHT AFTER THE ULRA AT the Palace made a visit to the head office of San Miguel Corp. recently and press lic Ino Miguel vice chair Ramon Ang, who is simply RAB to San Miguel insiders.

Make what you will out of the, shall we say, "coincidence," but I think that our beloved Globetrotter did not just want to clown around during the visit.

She definitely sought something out of it. You know—such as possible membership.

In, President of the Republic, she could have just summoned the San Miguel people to the Palace and they would have come faster than a Remolacha car.

Of course Gloriastas can always cite many instances in her official travels that she has San Miguel executives in their own offices.

After all, national finances—as an official friend of this rule administration—state 17 percent of San Miguel through the Coconut Industry Investment Fund.

And the government supposedly acts only as the caretaker of the CIIF interest in San Miguel, handpicking directors to the board of the publicly listed firm, who even serves coconut farmers.

Anyway, from what I gathered, the visit actually turned into a briefing for the President regarding San Miguel's big acquisitions lately.

In particular, the Ramon Ang-led group is forthrying to hold on to Rugby company Meralco.

In the market, they are saying that the MVP and the Lopez group make for strange bedfellows.

Remember that, only a few years ago, MVP was said to have already tried to get into Meralco, initially by acquiring the Meralco holdings of Spanish utility group Iberdrola.

The Lopezes' Five Holdings never declined, mind, even Firm Pacific, because it has the right of first refusal over the Union Fenosa holdings.

But how valid an alliance could the Lopez group establish with First Pacific, or for that matter, with the SM group?

The main stockholder of First Pacific is of course the Salim group in Indonesia.

Question: Does the Lopez group have direct access to the Salim group?

Word has it that a close Miguel figure is a longtime friend of the Salim Family.

As for SM group's Tenang, he is also said to be close to the new figure. Well, the SM group used to have a board seat in San Miguel.

That is getting to be interesting, don't you think? The stock market thinks so.

* * *

AN ARCHITECT named Felino A. Palafox Jr. has been making a lot of noise in media, choosing at the UNMA Dubai Bay Metropolitan Authority) environmental issue such as the cutting of trees at the Subic bay port.

Getting the heat of issues was SBMA head Armand Arreza, whom Palafox claimed to have influential backers.

For instance, Palafox claimed in hearings in the House of Representatives that one of Arreza's kid was asking money from BUMA leaders. You know—as in extorting.

Palafox forgets to say, of course, which one of the two kids of Arreza it was, whether the 8-year-old or the 12-year-old.

But then Palafox provided the House with incontrovertible proof to his claims by saying that he only heard those things.

Anyway, this is what I heard about the whole affair. It seems that Palafox has interests in a resort called Moon Bay Resort, is very owned by a company called Subic Coastal Development Corp. Word has it that Palafox is one of its stockholders.

Now the company was wooing a Korean group to investing in a hotel-casino project at their site in the Subic free port.

Unfortunately for Palafox and company, the Koreans completely dropped the project, supposedly because the site was subject to controversy.

The Korean group insisted about another site, a reclamation lot at the free port that never before had that issue.

Subsequently, Palafox started to make a big fuss out of the plan of the Korean group to cut down those fruit trees.

Now, the site of the Moon Bay Resort project—some 16.5 hectares of it—at least based on the House hearings, also used to have a lot of trees.

Exactly what happened to them, Palafox was not saying. Maybe he did not have the luck to hear talk about the cutting of those trees.

# *Major telcos seen surviving downturn*

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

THE CONSTITUTING MAJOR telecommunication firms are expected to withstand the global economic storm given their dominant positions in the market, credit evaluator Fitch Ratings said in a research report.

In the rating firm's Asia Pacific telecoms outlook for 2009, which was released on Thursday, Fitch Ratings analyst Priya Dayin said television giants Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Globe Telecom Inc. were "well-positioned to weather the ongoing downturn" due to their sizable market positions and robust balance sheets.

Fitch said both telcos were generating positive free cash flows, supported by moderate capital spending and limited external funding requirements.

"Both PLDT and Globe are beneficiaries of a relatively inactive regulatory regime, which effectively favors leading operators as it facilitates little change to the existing industry structure," it said.

Their debt positions will also remain relatively stable.

"Both PLDT and Globe boast of healthy liquidity and strong free cash flow. However, after paying special dividends, cash flow generation could be modest for PLDT and is projected to be negative for Globe in 2009," Fitch said.

The ratings firm also expects both firms to continue generating excess cash to shareholders this year in the absence of any major merger and acquisition activity.

Globe's capital expenditures for this year was estimated at $350 million to $400 million, slightly lower than year-ago level. Fitch says PLDT to keep spending as much as $600 million, almost the same as the 2008 level.

Cellular phone growth in the country is seen "moderating" with operators exploring alternative avenues for growth, such as consumer broadband, or home coverage.

PLDT has diversified into call center operations and business process outsourcing (BPO), which represents a significant shift from its core telecom operations. On the outsourcing front, Fitch Ratings said near-term prospects were challenging due to weak economic conditions in major markets such as the United States.

# Aquaculture expected to post 8% growth

By Rea T. Cibranduia

AQUACULTURE IS EXPECTED to post the highest growth rate among agriculture subsectors this year at 8.2 percent, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Following aquaculture are banana at 6.2 percent; poultry, 5.4 percent, and municipal fisheries, 4.7 percent, the DA said.

With nearly all available sea land already utilized, the sea subsector may post a 4.4 percent growth this year. The department said this would still be higher than the average annual global growth rate of 3.2 percent or 66 million tons, or about the same as the 2008 level.

Cellular phone growth in the country is seen "moderating" with operators exploring alternative avenues for growth, such as consumer broadband, or home coverage.

PLDT has diversified into call center operations and business process outsourcing (BPO), which represents a significant shift from its core telecom operations. On the outsourcing front, Fitch Ratings said near-term prospects were challenging due to weak economic conditions in major markets such as the United States.

The department has been particularly optimistic about mudcrab culture, which involves raising aquatic animals to cultivation.

The DA last month issued Administrative Order 1 to key provinces, including Zamal Del Sur, to encourage them to put up hatcheries and post-harvest facilities like chillers and ports.

Also last month, the department announced the opening of a new satellite hatchery in Misamis Occidental through the joint efforts of the provincial government, the Australian government and the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center.

The P8.8-million hatchery was built through a joint undertaking with the Australian government through the Philippines-Australia Local Sustainability (PALS) program, which allocated P5.36 million for the project.

The Misamis Occidental provincial government donated the P2.44 million ocean outpost land to complete the hatchery, the department said.

# SMIC posted 15.6% profit growth in '08

By Doris C. Dumlao

SEMI, TYCOON HENRY SY'S HOLDING company, SM Investments Corp., posted a net profit of P14 billion last year, up by 15.6 percent over a year ago, on the back of double-digit growth in retail and real estate sales.

Consolidated revenue increased by 19 percent to P147.5 billion, boosted by P134.9 billion in retail sales and P5.8 billion in real estate sales.

The company also benefited from extraordinary gains from the sale of its San Miguel Corp. shares which more than compensated for the mark-to-market losses incurred by the group to its trading positions as a result of the global financial crisis.

Company chief Henry Sy Jr. said: "This reflects the strength of SM's financial position which will allow it not only to weather the current financial turmoil, but to benefit from valuable opportunities arising from the crisis which, in turn, will help the company emerge as a stronger business when the global economy recovers."

SMIC is involved mainly in four core businesses namely retail merchandising, shopping malls, banking and financial services, and property.

# Semiconductor firms . . .

From page B1

demand drivers such as personal computers, cell phones, automobiles and consumer items remained under pressure," he added.

On the local front, semiconductor and electronics industries of the Philippines Inc. chairArthur Ty ing said the industry would suffer its worst performance this quarter.

One of the industry's sectors at this point, he said, ramped up by the new obligations notebooks, or mini-notebooks, so demand for such PCs continued to buck the global trend.

According to Gartner, global shipments of these mini-notebooks would reach 21 million units this year, from 11.7 million units in 2008.

However, since these should represent only 8 percent of total PC shipments for the year, the high demand for netbooks was not expected to boost the semiconductor industry's chip mark.

Ty ing said these PCs also required fewer semiconductor parts, so they were not seen to make that much of a dent on overall semiconductor demand.

Semiconductors accounted for 75-80 percent of the country's total annual exports.

Last year, semiconductor exports reached $26.6 billion, 6.3 percent lower than the year before, Ty ing said.

The decline in exports was attributed to slower demand in main markets United States, Western Europe and Japan. Ty ing said, which local manufacturers tried to offset with sales in Eastern Europe, South America and China.

"But when the crisis hit, we had to throw everything out the window. In the fourth quarter of last year, semiconductor demand just fell off the cliff," he said. "Moving forward, it becomes even more challenging."

# Increase in BSP . . .

From page B1

points below the latest 91-day treasury bill rate.

"The BSP reverse repo (buys or the overnight borrowing) rate is the BSP's main policy lever and, for more effective monetary policy, all BSP monetary policy instrument should be priced based on this policy rate," Tenazas said earlier.

# BUSINESS

## DBS sees slower inflation for RP

By Reena V. Domingo

FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP DBS expects the government to report slower inflation today which it said would prompt the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to cut interest rates by another 50 basis points.

In its latest report on the Philippines, DBS forecasts a 6.6-percent year-on-year increase in February consumer prices, cooling down from 7.1 percent the previous month.

"Given the continued sharp decline in commodity and food prices, offset by components of the CPI (you cannot price index) probably dowed to year-on-year terms," the bank said.

"In fact the fuel/light/water component likely fell for a third month, by 3.3 percent, as crude oil prices tumbled in half the levels seen a year ago," it added.

The other five commodity groups in the CPI are food, beverages and tobacco; clothing, housing and repairs; services; and miscellaneous items.

Today, the National Statistics Office is set to release data on February inflation, while the BSP's Monetary Board (MB) is scheduled to meet and decide on whether to change its key policy rates.

"The CPI report will be confirmation that inflation remains the least of the central bank's concerns at the moment," DBS said.

"Easing policy is likely to continue in the coming months," it added. "We look for the benchmark rates to reach 4 percent and 6 percent, respectively by (end of 2009), with risks to the downside."

Last Jan. 29, the MB—BSP's policy-making body—cut by 50 bps the overnight borrowing rate to 5 percent and the lending rate to 7 percent based on expectation that inflation will fall as expected.

Maintaining interest that inflation in 2009 would settle between 2.3 and 4.3 percent from 9.3 percent in 2008.

## BSP has room to cut key rates

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## IT sector aims to keep people

By Abigail L. Ho

AMID THE UNRELENTING RETRENCHments in the global information technology industry, the Information Technology Association of the Philippines will aims to keep IT workers within its fold.

Ivan Seda, president and Lenovo Philippines country manager Vicky Aparrilla said that before letting IT workers find jobs in other industries, the IT sector would try as much as possible to keep them within their actual fields of interest.

"We're focused on keeping the flock together. We want to help affected employees find jobs within the industry. We're spoken with the (Commission on Information and Communications Technology), and they're willing to have a dialog to determine how the government can help the industry," she said.

Semiconductor and Electronics Industries of the Philippines Inc. chair Arthur Ang, however, admitted that it would be difficult to do the same in his sector, as electronics demand remained in a slump.

"They are always go to the business process outsourcing sector, as there are more jobs there. They will be underemployed, but at least they'll have jobs," he said.

According to Business Process Association of the Philippines chief executive Oscar Javier, the BPO sector still had a lot of jobs to offer—around 100,000-150,000 for this year alone—and that it was prepared to absorb displaced workers from other industries.

Leon Vivo, president and chief executive of research firm SMC Global, however, provided a bleaker picture of things to come.

"Permit to be more pessimistic here. More IT and nonmanufacture jobs will be shed in 2009. Around 10,000 IT jobs in the Philippines are at risk," he said.

"The total industry headcount growth forecast is down from 23 percent from 2003-2008 to 13.8 percent (compounded annual growth rate) through 2010. Our own projection of 800,000 jobs by 2010 is also at risk," he added, saying 360,000 jobs looked to be the more feasible target now.

## Cabinet departments told to gear up for more funds

AS THE NATIONAL BUDGET FOR 2009 GOES pursued to soon become law, the Department of Budget and Management has urged departments to get ready to absorb significant increases in budgets and accelerate spending.

Data from the DBM show that departments with high capital outlays have relatively low absorptive capacity particularly the departments of education (DepEd), public works and highways (DPWH), agriculture (DA) and transportation and communication (DOTC).

Some of the reasons behind the chronic delays: up budgets include delays in bidding processes and the implementation of procurement machines.

In 2008, DepEd could only tap 75 percent of funds earmarked for the construction of new school buildings and 77 percent of the money for repairs.

Budget Secretary Rolando G. Andaya Jr. said such numbers were already improvements from 50.5 percent and 47.2 percent, respectively in 2007.

Last year, the DPWH was able to use only 70.4 percent of funds, while the DA used up only 62.3 percent.

In 2007, the numbers were 70.6 percent for DPWH and 81.2 percent for DA.

Andaya said raising the absorptive capacity of these departments was crucial considering that the budget for these offices would increase by as much as one-fifth this year.

Both chambers of Congress passed the proposed budget of P1.415 trillion in January.

Reena V. Domingo

JOB SEEKERS talk to recruiters at the Miami Dade College Mega Job Fair 2009 in North Miami, Florida. Job fairs across the country are seeing huge turnouts as the economy continues to falter, leaving more people unemployed. AFP

## China's legislature focuses on economic stimulus

BEIJING—IT IS CHINA'S $586-BILLION question, and outsiders are watching this week's legislative meeting for details of how Beijing is spending the stimulus announced in November to reverse a slump that has thrown millions out of work.

Beijing's decisions are being closely watched abroad, where outsiders hope the world's third largest economy can help to pull the world out of recession by reviving its own growth and demand for imports. The speed and effectiveness of its stimulus could make a difference in how quickly the world recovers.

A key issue will be what Beijing does about health and education. They are budgeted to receive 1 percent of the stimulus. But economists say reducing the need of Chinese families to save heavily by school and medical costs will be critical to achieving the plan's goal of encouraging them to spend more on other things.

The legislature is largely powerless but its ceremonial annual meeting that opens today will give the government a platform to unveil new initiatives and encourage anxious consumers and companies to keep spending.

China's economic growth fell to seven-year low of 6.8 percent in the fourth quarter—well the strongest of any major economy but well below 2007's blistering 13 percent. A planning official said last week Beijing is confident it can achieve 8 percent growth this year, but outside analysts have cut their forecasts to as low as 6 percent and say it might come in below that.

The 4-trillion yuan ($586 billion) stimulus is aimed at reducing reliance on trading exports by boosting domestic consumption.

The government says most of it will be spent on building highways, airports and other public works.

Authorities might try to boost public confidence by announcing will more spending on top of the stimulus. AP

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## Asian stock markets rebound

HONG KONG—ASIAN STOCK MARKETS REbounded Wednesday as hopes China would expand measures to revive its economy weekend gnawing signs of economic decay in the United States and other major countries. Shanghai's index jumped more than 6 percent.

The upward move followed heavy selling now the last two days and hacked a fifth straight day of declines on Wall Street.

Helping sentiment were figures suggesting Chinese manufacturing, while contracting again in February, did so at a slower rate than the previous month. For many investors, the news signaled that China's demand and growth may stabilize sooner than other countries' and in the process bring equities back to the more global downturn in decades.

Optimism over China helped offset more economic gloom elsewhere, this time in Australia, where the economy shrank 0.5 percent in the last quarter of 2008. The contraction, which surprised economists, was the country's first in almost eight years.

Despite the gains, trade was broken in some markets, and analysts were leaning for more selling that could lead stock benchmarks to test lows reached last year at the height of the credit crisis.

In Japan, the Nikkei 225 stock average was up 613.24 points, or 8.9 percent, to 7,290.96, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 345.08, or 2.5 percent, to 12,303.61. South Korea's Kospi climbed 2.3 percent to 1,050.26.

In mainland China, Shanghai's index surged 116.66, or 6.1 percent, to 2,198.11.

Markets in Singapore, Taiwan and New Zealand also gained. Australia's index eked 1.4 percent.

Overnight in the United States, the Dow fell 37.27, or 0.6 percent, to 6,726.02, its lowest close since April 21, 1997. The index is now down more than 52 percent from its record of 14,164.53 set in October 2007. AP

## Airlines launch price war

SINGAPORE—ASIAN LOW-COST AIRLINES are offering dirt-cheap tickets to perk up travel during the summer holidays amid the global economic downturn.

Singapore-based Tiger Airways, which flies to destinations in Southeast Asia, Australia and China, announced Tuesday it would launch summer fares starting at about $95, including taxes.

Jetstar Asia, another Singapore-based budget airline, said it had extended until Aug. 16 a promotion to beat the cheapest prices offered by rivals.

Under the promotion, should a traveler find another published online fare cheaper than the lowest available on www.jetstarasia.com, the airline will beat the price by 10 percent if the customer makes an honest reservation by phone.

Malaysian budget airline Air Asia also has its "sale-not-stop" promotion.

Among its offers is a one-way flight from Singapore to Bangkok starting from $92, inclusive of taxes, for travel from March 23 to Sept. 11, according to its website.

Comparatively, a return flight to Singapore or Singapore Airlines runs $337, inclusive of taxes.

Indonesia's Lion Air is selling a one-way trip from Singapore to Bali for as low as $5.80 for travel from June 1 to Sept. 30, according to its website.

Thailand's Nok Air is offering one-way fares for as low as 25 cents, excluding taxes and fees, for domestic flights for travel beginning from May 15 to Sept. 30, its website showed. AFP

Lito Thelma Simon San Juan

# LIFESTYLE Food

# Philippine cheese we can be proud of

BLUE Goat Cheese

The Puentespinas' Bo-ang goat's milk yields varieties comparable to European favorites

WHO WOULD HAVE thought the Philippines could produce cheese comparable to European varieties? It would, thanks to the clan of Oliver Puentespinas of Davao.

Tagged as the Pinoy "Swiss family Robinson," the Puentespinas are well-known for cut-flowers and plants, bird and salmon breeding, ostrich meat and exotic, making tasty delicacies from ostrich eggs and hundreds, tapang beefsi and Tagaytay wine, tables presuming and tables cake.

They also produce virgin coconut oil, coconut soap, ornamental squash and goat dolls. They raise Bo-ang goats and produce goat meat and gatsas (lard).

The Puentespinas own Malagos, a 12-ha garden resort in Davao—the first property in the Philippines and the 29th in the world.

PHILIPPINE CU

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## THE QUIET DINER
RESTOS AT A GLANCE

### 'Conservative' meal of pickled ox tongue, roasted river trout and baked cannelloni

LOLO OMAY'S BRASSERIE—GROUND floor, 6750 Ayala Ave., Makati; call 8184750.

One first notice: all was nobody was picking up the phone at 8 p.m., the night we wanted to book a table. The next morning, it took quite a while to get connected. However, we wanted to keep the budget we decided on, and the ambience in the room was calculated.

Dining area—richer rust and melancholy in cafe au lait and chocolate browns. Chairs are of low and high backs, alternating among the rubber trees, showcasing the opulence hall. The drapes are from ceiling to floor. Tables are devoid of color, flowers and linen.

Each table is covered with white paper. This is our first area. The paper gets wet from cold drinks, hence neither unsightly. Do they recycle the conspicuously dry ones? One staff was seen simply turning it over. Better us, to be sure it does not get used the second time.

Staff—all young, in black tops and trousers with red aprons. Nice and decent gather away from the tables, nearly oblivious to diners wanting to place their orders. Soon they warm up with smiles. They know what they offer.

Service—regular. Water came a bit late, but was fast with the refill. No menu ops with orders, ready given when was asked for. Don't wonder if no bread and butter are placed on your table as you settle down. "No complimentary bread. Ma'am," volunteered the staff. Pay for the Pop corn bread at P100 for 3 pieces. This is a treat be-

CONDOMINIUM C

# Fantasy cuisine
## 'coutured' to your taste

By Yasgin Bagu-Reyes

A five-star-in-one private dining room in 21. It is unexceptionally housed in Pizza Hut Inc. owned by the self-confessed "frustrated chef" Enrico Omar Teehankee.

The room is basically closed all the time unless you call in for reservation. But, once you do, 21 opens its doors to a world of possibilities—and fantasies. From a Moroccan-inspired setting with lavish floral arrangements to a laid-back ambiance, to cribs and chairs, but only couches, pillows and wine bar.

Or, it can be a romantic nook for candlelit dinner, complete with silverware, self piped-in music and butler; or a dinner party with servers lining up in pairs to serve the food directly to you.

With a projector screen, white board and sound system, it's also ideal for meetings.

21 can transform into anyone's whim and pleasure. Well, its versatility doesn't run on its square dinner. The food is a different story altogether, with the executive chef of chef Ed Quimson and Emile at the helm.

### 'Couture' food

Pesto Beef Calderon Ravioli with Triple Tomatoes and Balsamic Reduction; Lapu-Lapu Wilder Fish Pumpkin Gnocchi, the list is exciting.

The luxury Roast Beef Wellington comes wrapped in puff pastry drizzled with balsamic reduction. The melt-in-your-mouth lamb tenderloin is marinated with coffee and Debrecen Art green jelly.

"We call our food cosmopolitan," says Quimson. Emile describes it as "a mish-mash of everything we think we do well." "We also 'couture' dishes according to the preferences of our client," she adds.

In our layman high-end gathering at 21, Quimson "couture"d a menu that brought bliss to its guests...paella de bandera bulk, Adult Bird with beef mushroom Arabian, phyllo-wrapped stuffed queso manchego and prune servers. That shrimp salad, sardines pasé and beef tenderloin lasagna.

Quimson's expertise revolves around Spanish and Filipino fare, Emile concentrates on Asian-inspired food.

"We don't have a menu," says Emile. "That's why we want you to call in and plan it with us."

Call three days in advance or at least a day before for planning. Depending on how meticulous—and fabulous—the event is, Emile requests for a week in advance with a minimum of P12,000 per head/pax. It can be à la carte or buffet style.

### An afterthought

When Emile opened Pesto & Pilar, a high-style artisanal bar pasa, she realized there must be a venue for Quimson's culinary inventions.

"21 was really just an afterthought. Chef Ed is known for his high-end stuff, while I wanted a low, comfortable type of restaurant. So at 21 to take away his creative juices, I allocated a small portion of the restaurant for him," says Emile.

21 at Pesto & Pilar is located at the 6/F Atlas Center Building, Upper Avenue cor/ Nueng Street.

21 doesn't have a set menu. Chefs Quimson and Emile collaborate with patrons to prepare one

ROAST Beef Wellington

She named it "21" because it comfortably sits 21 persons (or 29 max!).

Emile and Quimson collaborate on the menu, design and look of 21. In partnership for a while now, like in Splendido's Ladies and Le Regalia, they obviously work well together.

"21 is a complete casual-dinner space. Aside from the food, we are particularly proud of our kitchen utensils. We have stylish plates of different shapes and sizes. We have elegant wine shelves and glasses. The room also has its own spacious restroom adorned with floral vases and scented candles," says Quimson.

"Plus we, this room is very versatile. They can do anything here except sex," says Emile.

21 at Pesto & Pilar is located at the 6/F Atlas Center Building, Upper Avenue cor/ Nueng Street.

MANGO Almond Torte

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### Beef Calderonta Ravioli with Triple Tomatoes and Balsamic Reduction

- 750 g beef short ribs
- 200 g beef loin
- 144 g butter
- 50 g garlic, chopped
- 150 g onions, chopped
- 1 lt. red wine
- 300 ml pineapple juice
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp soy sauce
- 2 pc chili (labuyo)
- 1 can liver spread
- 600 ml tomato sauce
- ½ k arborio (rice)

CORNETTOS of Wonu Fish Stuffed with Imperial Crab Striations on Roasted Red and Green Bell Pepper Sauce

- ½ k prawns (cubes)
- 100 g bell pepper (cubes)

1. Boil the meat for about 30 minutes, drain and set aside.
2. Sauté garlic and onions in butter.
3. Add meat, water, pineapple juice, salt and soy sauce.
4. Let it boil until the meat is soft.
5. Add remaining ingredients except liver spread.
6. Simmer for about 10-20 minutes or until vegetables are cooked.
7. Add liver spread then simmer for another 10 minutes.

STRAWBERRY Cheesecake Napoleon

21 CREATIVE DUO: Karina Perez Estella and chef Ed Quimson

For pasta dough:
Ingredients
300 g flour
2 whole eggs
1 tbsp olive oil
Pinch of salt

1. Mix the flour. Make a well in the center. Break the egg. Add oil. With a fork, slowly incorporate the flour with the egg and oil mixture until all the flour has been mixed.
2. Round until smooth and pliable.
3. Roll the dough using pasta maker into thickness number eight.
4. Cut the pasta with round cutter.
5. Fill the dough with calderonta.
6. Top with triple tomatoes: chopped sun-dried tomatoes, fresh tomato sauce and chopped fresh tomato. Drizzle with balsamic reduction.

# Crème brûlée, Spanish style

By Norma Chikiamco
Contributor

EVERY LAST FRIDAY OF THE month, The Tivoli restaurant of The Manila Oriental Manila offers a Night of Wines and Fine Dining, a gourmet treats extravaganza in a theme, with cuisine of a different ethnic.

Last Friday had Spanish cuisine and wines, with dishes from different regions in Spain.

The leisure mealtimes evoked its calm air are a specialty of Catalan gastronomy, a cold season more made with tomatoes, is from traditional region. Bean stew, popularly known as fabada, is an Asturian dish.

The seven-course menu included a salad of tomatoes spiked with sherry vinegar, fresh herbs and cubes (Spanish blue cheese) and rack of lamb drizzled with light honey sauce, with spinach puree and potato-style (mixed with raisins and pine nuts) on the side.

Each course had the appropriate Spanish wine: Sherry wine made with Fino-style and Manzanilla grapes from Penedes region was just right for the seafood. The empedrado and tostada salad were served with crisp Sauvignon Blanc, also from Penedes. The toaster meat course of rack of lamb was matched with an equally luscious red wine, a 2004 Valdeconsa Reserva, made with Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon grape varieties.

Dessert, or what the Spaniards call postre, was Crema Catalana, the Spanish version of crème brûlée. Though already very satisfying in itself, Crema Catalana was matched with a tasting of crisp cheeses with chocolate dip.

Last Friday of March, says Tivoli manager Wilhelm Gough, the restaurant will focus on Australian cuisine. April will showcase New Zealand and May, asparagus and German cuisine for its gastronomic theme. (For reservations, call 7900888, local 2021 or 2422).

Here is The Tivoli's recipe for Crema Catalana, which I've kitchen-tested. It's so easy as cooking leche flan and makes quite an impressive dessert to serve guests.

### Crema Catalana

2 c fresh milk
1 cinnamon stick or ½ tsp ground cinnamon
Zest of ½ orange or lemon
1 tsp vanilla extract
6 egg yolks
1 tbsp cornstarch
1 c white granulated sugar, divided

Combine milk, cinnamon, orange or lemon zest and vanilla in a saucepan. Bring to a boil then lower heat to simmer. Let simmer, stirring occasionally for about 10 minutes to infuse the milk with flavor. Strain. Set mixture aside.

In a mixing bowl, whisk together egg yolks, cornstarch and ¼ c of the sugar until mixture is thickened and becomes a light creamy yellow. Reserve remaining ¾ cup sugar for the topping. Pour slowly into the milk while whisking vigorously.

Over medium-low heat, bring the mixture to a simmer, stirring often. Reduce heat and let mixture simmer until thick, about 10 minutes. Do not allow to boil. Divide equally among four ramekins or any heat-proof containers. Chill in refrigerator for at least four hours or until set.

Just before serving: Preheat broiler for about 10 minutes. Sprinkle remaining ¼ cup sugar on top of each ramekin, distributing equally. Heat in broiler until sugar caramelizes. Or, if you have a portable torch, carefully heat the sugar. Crema Catalana with the torch act on how to medium heat until sugar caramelizes. Serve at once.

### Tips

- Use a balloon whisk when whisking the egg yolks to make it easier to incorporate sugar and cornstarch.
- Be sure to whisk vigorously when pouring the egg yolk mixture into the milk so mixture doesn't curdle.
- If using a portable torch to caramelize the sugar, be sure it's one made specially for culinary purposes and use it only in a well-ventilated area. To protect your eyes, wear heat-proof eye goggles.
- The caramelized sugar topping gives the dish added sweetness and texture. However, this dessert is also good even without the topping.

# Philippine cheese we can be proud of

From page C1

ca be certified by the Asiabios Cooperative Sanctuary Program. It is home to exotic birds and hosts the only live, interactive bird show in the Philippines.

Malagos Garden Resort is also an accredited wildlife farm—with butterflies, indigenous birds and other wildlife species. It has the world's only weeping walling forest, considered as one of the most important Philippine species.

As chocomaniacs, Oliver uses the cocoa-bits of goat's milk from their Sa-ang herd and cocoa milk from their cows. Their cow-cheese first is to die for.

Oliver said, "I started expanding the cheese line as I matured as cheesemaker. The new-found confidence after my journey to the cheese regions of Wisconsin and Hartwick, California fueled my passion."

"I will also have the privilege of learning cheese-making from a Swiss cheese master very soon. This time opposite our

is still head size to some cocharacterized but definitely outstanding world of cheese."

Among her new ones, try Lacuna verbale (blue goat cheese, which is semi-soft aged with the blue mold made from goat's milk. Mild and suited to the Filipino taste.

Blush, a semi-soft cheese made from cow's milk, is aged with both white and blue mold. It is also mild and savory.

Chevre, French-style fresh cheese, develops until about three months. Here is a good balance between creamy and tart.

Blue Peppato Boulder is made from cow's milk. It is made with green pepper corns and aged with blue mold. The burst of heat that comes when you bite into green pepper corn lends interesting flavor.

Her homage from and love for herb chefs are also wonderful.

Olive believes there is money in cheese-making, especially in now that the Filipino's palate has become more adventurous.

She shares her Whole Milk Ricotta recipe.

### Whole Milk Ricotta

Start with about 2 litres of milk. Add salt, about 1.5 to 2 percent, and heat to 90°C. Measure about 50 ml of white vinegar and slowly pour it on hot milk. Stir slowly until it boils. Turn heat off and let milk settle for 15 minutes.

The cheese will rise on top of the milk with yellowish whey below it. Strain the cheese and drain on sterile cheese cloth. Allow to drain until you get desired firmness, for around 30 minutes. Use this cheese at once with bread or for cooking pasta.

(Olive's Cheeses, 0917-7000205; cheese-making supplies...Atlas of Dairies, 09178197702)

My new cheese wholesaler mates, I am also about to begin my Gourmet Cooking's Series for beginners and household cooks.

Another culinary trip to Pampanga is in April with food historian Lilia Borromeo. Culture and history professor Francis Manzo and I will teach ancestral Pampanga recipes and cooking techniques.

For inquiries, call 8280296/8273008 and look for Jane; or 09175492/8902372246 and look for Rose.

*E-mail the author at rsquisumbing@inquirer.com.ph*

# 'Conservative' meal of pickled ox tongue . . .

From page C7

names the old "sandwich" bread (in shape) and croissant (in texture and flavor).

Suggested meal—initially intimidating because silk has it—but the place is very expensive. After looking at the lunch menus (P1,300+ and P1,400+), we thought of ordering to see "pre-meditated". Indigo and ordered a "restaurateur" meal for sharing. We could not have been more like flying. "Only for the Rich Salad," the waiter was Pickled Ox Tongue with a slice of melon, some greens (the arugula more or gone) with rose and dates sauce. Great, it brought us to the "higher" of the day. Roasted River Trout (imported fish of salmon family), perfectly crispy with fried potatoes, a bit of greens with dainty-sized crispy onion. Mushroom Chimaffredi baked with Ravioli Cheese (on cup) served with Mango Chili, actually a sandwich using grilled bread. No dessert, brewed coffee to reward...among, robust with warm milk, exactly how it should be.

The restaurant's plates are very creative plating, all in white servers, all artistically (pressure-perfect) done, making colors and texture. Taste, as our patrons said between bites, "everything is delicious." And we did not spend that much money.

Service—the little research indeed little, but with A-1 flavors.

Usual charges for service and tax, and service cards are honored.

RATING INDEX

Poor

Good

Excellent

Rating -

# Affordable executive lunch

Pablo Cluet Inasa offers a set of affordable Executive Lunch: Lengua Estofado with rice and vegetables topped with Sarsaya Ice for dessert; Dalinos a la Marinera with rice and Ensalada Ice Cream; Pollo a la Kiev with rice and Sarsaba Ice Cream; Poached Cream Story with Spinach Sauce with boiled potatoes, and Ensalada Ice Cream; or Beef Salpicao with rice and Sarsaba Ice Cream. Text 0921-710-5853 or call 531-6816/17.

## Westgate's Rumah Makan

Rumah Makan offers Indonesian-style seaweed meats and seafood; sate (soup), garde gado (ground peanuts and spices with cooked vegetables), desserts and Indonesian coffee. At Westgate Filinity, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Call 840-2617 loc. 219.

## Gumbo's new meals

Gumbo launches four dishes: USDA Stuffed Beef Short ribs (braised USDA beef in a rich mixture of carrots, celery, bell peppers, etc., served with Cajun rice or sautéed potatoes); Chicken Marsala (pan-seared chicken breast, served with spaghetti pasta in a rich and delicious marsala sauce with mushrooms and onions); Poached Seabass Cream (seabass, carefully cooked in a rich, flavorful classic cream sauce with potatoes and mixed vegetables); and French-Cut Lamb Chops (two pieces tender and juicy lamb chops, marinated in our very own mix of spices, grilled to your liking, served with any two side dishes and special gravy). Gumbo is at 3/F, Entertainment Hall, Mall of Asia; 3/F, Robinsons Manila Midtown; 2/F, SM City The Block, North Edsa; and 3/L, Atrium Bldg. at Megamall. Call 556-8250/442-8166/557-1835.

## Seafoods galore

Blu Fish offers Moroccan Sea Bass, Thai Coconut Curry Bouillabaisse, New England Crab and Lobster Boil, Poached Pear and Mocki Choco Tart; Champa Wave Profiteroles; Apple Walnut Crisp a la Mode and the Grape and Red Wine Syrup-Smothered Cheesecake. Blu Fish (contemporary Coastal Cooking by Red Crab) is on 5/L of the new Eastwood Mall. Call 000-0000.

## Mini sandwiches

Sugarhouse recently opened a full-service branch at Eastwood Citywalk 2. Apart from cakes, cookies and pies are quick orders of Filipino favorites, tasty Siopao, mini-sandwiches filled with chicken, tuna, ham-bu-ger or cold cuts as served with 6 trial balls of potato. Call 443-1134.

## Pinoy breakfast

Max's Restaurant offers two new Pinoy favorites, Longganisa Platter Meal is served with homemade from Pampanga. Vigan longganisa and Marinara longganisa, brewed coffee, two eggs, your choice of scrambled or sunny-side up, tomatoes and garlic rice or plain rice. The Tinapang Bangus Meal includes two eggs, tomatoes, your choice of plain or garlic rice and brewed coffee. Max's serves breakfast from 7-10 a.m. The two new additional breakfasts are also available for delivery reservations at selected Max's greater Manila area stores only. Call 7-8000 or log on to http://www.maxschicken.com.

## Kingklip dishes

InterContinental Manila's Prime Allied Rotisserie is serving kingklip, deep-water fish belonging to the cod-eel family from South Africa, until March 31. Dishes include White Kingklip Filet "Rossini" topped with Iberico Duck Liver, White Summer Truffle and Champagne Vinegar and Shallot Sauce; Roasted Kingklip Fillet with Mich Morrel Spices, Shitake Mushrooms sauteed in Fresh Ginger and a Light Szechuan Sauce; Pan-fried Kingklip Fillet Meunière with Lemon, Capers and Parsley Sauce; Simmered Kingklip, Potatoes and Goat Cheese fondue garnished with Young Leeks and White Summer Truffle; and Pan-fried Kingklip Filet with Crispy Vegetable Tempura and French Oyster Sauce. Diners from March 1-April 30 will get a chance to win a weekend stay for two (three days/two nights) at InterContinental Singapore (worth P70,000 food and beverage bill credits) that has a raffle draw, on a weekend overnight stay for two at Holiday Inn Clark, Holiday Inn Galleria or Crowne Plaza Galleria. Call 703-9000.

## 'Palabok' special

An Icebergs' top-seller with toppings of shrimps, lady-pork, sliced eggs, crunchy chicharon and special sauce, Palabok Specials is a must. Other snacks and rice meals are Mexican Tacos, Homestyle Spaghetti, Southwest-style Fried Chicken, Non-stop Buffalo Wings, Grilled Chicken Rosemary Sandwich, Philly's Cheesesteak, Granny Beef Lasagna, Icebergs' Famous Wing, Grilled Pork Lemon, Korean Beef BBQ, Broiled Tapalog, Rib-eye Kalpukutin, Kare-a la Cubana and Chicken Cordon Bleu. Visit Icebergs at Filinvest Alabang, Muntinlupa City; SM City North Edsa; SM Mall of Asia; SM City Fairview; Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati; Greenbelt Drive, Paseo de Roxas; Powerplant, Rockwell Drive; Central Square, EDSA corner Ortigas Avenue; Trinoma, North Edsa; Robinsons Galleria, EDSA corner Ortigas Avenue; Robinsons Place, Ermita; Alabang Town Center, Muntinlupa City; Eastwood Cyberpark, Libis; Robinsons Manila, Ermita; Festival Supermall, Alabang; Robinsons Metro East, Pasig City; Robinsons Magnolia, Quezon City; Robinsons Galleria, Ortigas Avenue; Robinsons Place, Manila; Robinsons Forum, Pasig City; Robinsons Ermita, Manila

Field rats, rotten duck embryo–no, thanks, there's only so much I'll do for research

# Are you ready for extreme cuisine?

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO SPEAK ABOUT exotic food by an events management class at University of Santo Tomas, I had to look up in the dictionary the word "exotic"—something foreign, outlandish, bizarre but alluring, said the dictionary. There then, however, the term to use is "extreme cuisine," just like in sports where non-traditional games are called extreme sports.

What may be exotic to some may be regular to others so I use my experience to identify the unusual. Some of the entries I have gotten used to, so I don't consider them exotic anymore. I have developed a liking for some although the rest I wouldn't mind not feeling again, and there are a few I will not even attempt to taste.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

My first exotic foods were the deer and birds hunted by my grandfather and uncles in the mountains of Montalban. My grandmother would cook them. I didn't like the tough venison cuts but found the birds' heads wonderful, with crunchier like that.

I was a city girl who spent two years in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, when my father served there as envoy-at-large. There the waiters said I learned how to remove just fat-veined meat from its hair (tsibebeh) and roast the nuts. The rudely-tasty aroma of the nuts and the chalky taste of the fats have stayed in my memory.

We also learned to lay a trap to catch the hazard (porcupine) that's in our backyard that eats regular broiler a mountain. And one cook introduced us to frogs' legs which she boiled two weeks. Among the bread, I was the only one who ate the legs willingly, probably because I thought it was an adventure.

### 'Bayawak' eggs

Our cook never made a dish of the hazards for her young would but wear

'SAWSAW' refers to the Ilocos Norte cuisine

'SARSIJA' or chipmunk

hazard given it away. And take note, or maybe an invite hazard eggs, reputed to be even creamier than turtle eggs. Today I can stuffed frog, the bellch of Pampanga, and since the fried frogs' legs at the now closed Island Dreamers.

My lessons before taught his children how to eat seaweeds which, when we were young, were considered exotic. He used to roll seaweed fans in the Visayas). "Bobo proper" and loved the way the green globules burst moment in our mouths.

It seems is also the salmonellas, from bisaya pasa (angled) was something I never encountered before I married a Pinoy. It might only be our family but we never used to eat the seaweeds bulb. Visits to Leyte also introduced me to kinilaw. Pinoys are for the acetic acid (also known as lihiya), the lemon, and the many sour crops, one of which is a variety of taro that is made into their famous product, the sauce.

One of the more bizarre cuisines or policies I was told about is the eating. Also called chanwawa, it would be dog from Leyte shores, pressed from end to end to remove the gills and innards, then dipped into vinegar.

### Rotten-dark worm

On a food research in Isthmus, Oaxaca, a huge rotten hunk was brought in—my first time to see the tortilla. Also called wag-wag, the worm is lodged inside the intestines or mangrove branch. In skins, according to writer Tony Stanton whose husband is from there, the tortilla is often eaten as a gift still inside the intestines.

The tortilla looks like an albino with its black tapered body and its mouth looking like an eye. It tried to taste it but the fishy odor fainted me off. Its taste, though, is likened to milk in some books.

To describe what the cuttlefish or ramon like, familiar food is often mentioned. Mixed the tortilla and even the tahigalong is milky. I have even been told that the bayawak and field rats taste like chicken.

My adventurous spirit, however, will have to exclude Field rats. If my mind can't accept it, my palate can't as well. That was why I wouldn't even get to watch the movie "Ratatouille," about a chef-wannabe rat.

We all like to clear our foreign guests to eat hotel. I love those balut eggs—sure if the parents mask the growth of the duckling. I have eaten since but went for "abuwanad" where the duck embryo has died. The abuay is cooked in omelet with anyway to hide the dual odor, but when offered to taste the more intense rodenter-hated reliever the mother is already rotten (I forgot what it is called), I pass. There's only so much I will do for research.

E-mail: jmaybud@yahoo.com

## GOINGS ON

### Food expo opens today

The Philippine Food Processors and Exporters Organization will hold the 6th Philippine Food Expo on March 5 to 8 at SM Megamall Hall of (All Megamall, Mandaluyong City. Special sessions include a financing seminar by the Philippine Export Import Credit Agency, by the Food Development Center on March 6, Halal certification by the Office on Muslim Affairs and IT applications on the food manufacturing sector, March 6, and the tobacco product retailing by the Philippine Retailers Association, March 7. The first Asian Buyers Forum will be held March 7. Call (tel for limited at 687-0064, 687-2960).

### La Consolacion homecoming

La Consolacion College Manila will hold an alumnae homecoming on March 8. Former pupils/nurses belong to high school class 1980. For more details, call tel no. Ma. Luz E. Miguel, 775-2727, Marilene Lyncon-Wenceslao, 821-0981, Zenaida Lacerda-Coronel, 985-1057, and Zenaida Cruz-Burgos, 738-8811.

### UST piano concert at CCP

A concert concert called "Sampung Mga Daliri" featuring 10 pianists with vocal and instrumental soloists will have its 20th season/concert concert on March 7, 7 p.m. at the CCP main theater. Featured concert soloists/ensemble members are Cora Buhanadas, UST Conservatory Chorales, UST Men's Chorales, Lilingkod Vocal Ensemble, UST Symphony Orchestra, UST Chamber Orchestra, UST Guitar Ensemble, UST Jazz Band, UST Ensemble Ensemble, UST Percussion and Brass Ensemble under conductors Fernando Lucas, Ruel Cortinez, Dennis Bunoy, Jeffrey Solares, Ruben Reyes, Rosario Cabahug, Peter Paul Silva, Mario Marvin Tolentino, Daniel Bor-

tolome and Jonel Feliciano. Call 731-4027/3071, 830-1126/3071, and 897-0998 (Ticket Box 02).

### Veggie cooking class

Vegan chefs/cookbook author Tony Boggan's Wand," a three-module cooking series, where you will learn to prepare his cute veggie dishes from Italy (March 11), Mexico (March 18), and Asia (Mar 21). Chefs Nancy Reines & Mae Manalo will conduct techniques demonstrations, share their cooking secrets, tips about meat substitutes, local suppliers and specialty products. Classes will be held at Room Boy 3, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City, 2-5 p.m. Discounts apply for early registrations and for enrollment in all three classes. Slots are limited. For inquiries, e-mail to gaiahotels@yahoo.com. For further inquiries, call tel. no. 892-7648 or 09189 000 9658.

### Jazz wizard in Manila

Dave Koz, jazz pianist and singer, will perform on March 11 and 12 at Conway's Bar at Makati Shangri-La, and on March 13 at Whitespace, located along Dona Rosario Ave., Makati. Call 813-8888 ext. 7588/7589 or 840-3884.

### Batanes photo safari

Photographer Mandy Navarro will hold a photo safari on March 19-20 and 27-30 in Batanes. Lessons, portraiture, architectural, underscape, panorama and abstract photography. Call 896-1787/896-3238/09 10-2200/04; e-mail mandynavarro@yahoo.com.

### Boen Consejo reunion

Calling all 1970 graduates of College of Boen Consejo in Pasay City for a reunion celebrating their 50th anniversary on April 19. Call 896-de Salvaga at 8917.

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Editor Rosario Q. Valente

# ENTERTAINMENT

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## Jomari, Pops call it quits

JOMARI Yllana officially confirmed the news that he and girlfriend Pops Fernandez have broken up. Just last month, Yllana produced Fernandez's reunion concert with ex-husband Martin Nievera. In a press statement, Yllana said he and Fernandez didn't see eye-to-eye on a number of issues and have decided to call it quits. He said they "parted ways in good terms." Arnold Ingolito, Fernandez's manager, said "she is not yet ready to discuss the matter."

# The 'perfect comic'

JOEY de Leon

By Marinel R. Cruz

JOEY DE LEON DESCRIBED HIS JOBA OF a perfect comic: "He's someone who writes his own scripts and is not afraid to abuse his jokes with fellow artists."

Speaking to a group of writers at the launch of his new show "Joey's Quality World" last week, the 62-year-old award-winning actor and TV host declared: "Sorry sa lang ang mamumuno. If you're the kind of comedian who doesn't write that easy material), mahaba ang cuidado sa akin."

### Pointers

As the interview progressed, Joey took potshots at reactions to comments made by another TV host from a rival station. "I play a remake here from another channel," Joey said. "Sinasa'ill ajes-ang trabaho. Ajentan ka nga ajan."

Joey was referring to Willie Revillame, main host of the ABS-CBN noontime show "Wowowee," who had been quoted in tabloids with several remarks against "Eat ... Bulaga!"

Joey shared hosting chores with host friends Tito and Vic Sotto on "Eat ... Bulaga!"

Shifting attention to comedian-turned-host, Joey recalled that while the late actor Rene Requiestas was never a writer, he admired him for his ability to "transform" in front of the camera.

The two actors worked together in comedy films like "Tinorian," "Long Ranger & Tonton" and "Elvis and James."

"Rene was a different person when the camera rolled. He was good in delivering his lines. He used to act in the theater," Joey said. "After each take, he [ak out in one corner and kept to himself. I never saw him say anything on the set, always calm as lawa."

Joey said he had wanted to make the sequel to "Tinorian 2," but Rene, who played his sidekick Tinoroan, died of tuberculosis in 1993. "I already finished the script. But I'm not too-to-go to do it now than Rene is gone," the comedy actor said.

Joey added that he does not see himself making another film this year. He recently starred in "Mid Bidol: 30 Years After," with Tito and Vic. "I had wanted to do a sequel of Vic and Joma. I even wrote the script. But I [ak] magpuch different actors to play the part," said Joey.

Joey's Quality World" premiered March 1 on the Kapuso network. In the show, Joey plays the witty and fussy Napoleon Tolat. In the cast are Ryan Yllana as Madam Nida, and Cookie, Wally and Bochay as the triple-headed gypsy. It airs Saturdays and Sundays at 11:30 a.m.

Email marinel@inquirer.com.ph

JUDY Ann Santos

# Judai: Wedding plans no secret

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

AT THE 7TH GAWAD TANGLAW BEST ACTress co-winner Judy Ann Santos went up the stage twice—the second time, to accept the Best Film Actor (for "Blessing") and to correct herself.

"I realize said the awards' venue is a hospital," she told Inquirer Entertainment in an ex-

JUDAI 04

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

Be dazzled by these dancers as they perform Beyonce's "All the Single Ladies"

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# Miguel Escueta wants to do epic-rock

By Oliver M. Palombarik
Contributor

SINGER-SONGWRITER MIGUEL ESCUETA was among the promising performers who debuted five years ago, when "unplugged" music was already a fixture in the local bar scene.

His solid renditions of songs by John Mayer, The Beatles and Gin Gin Dolly were included in a compilation album of Magic 89.9's Acoustic Break competition in 2003, where he won first runner-up. He played more covers to gigs for a year and a half, and eventually recorded his debut album "I am MIGUEL" (MCA Music).

Months before landing a record deal, he was finishing Business Management at the Ateneo De Manila University. While eyeing an eatonomy brand manager position offered by a prestigious company, he wondered about taking an other career path.

Miguel said he found himself pondering, "What about music? Fabulous. If I get this job, I'll think, I'll do music. I did not get the job, and I told myself, 'It's no, it's music, all-out.'"

Now 24, Miguel is busy planning a second album after the success of "I am MIGUEL," which includes the well-received songs "Falling Away" "Adam" and "Take Me There," its repackaged version, "Amplified," is a 24-26 set with acoustic mixes and his versions of Stevie Wonder's "Blue Monday" and The Cure's "Just Like Heaven."

He plays in bars, but it's on campuses where fans go "crazy all the time." He occasionally collaborates with his unnamed band, comprised of Jong Tria (bass), Pen Sacilhan (drums), and Jonde Hernando (lead guitar, allmost produced).

Miguel and singer Adriana also recorded a version of "Fire to Ice," a song from Disney's "Camp Rock" movie.

**What lyrics are easiest to write?**

I write when I feel it progress, when I feel at the moment. I've written songs after a breakup. I think my lyrics are very honest, as much as I take it from inside, I also make it a point that people can relate to it.

**How do you keep your voice in shape?**

I had laryngitis last year, but I'm 110 percent recovered. I have a professional vocal coach I see at least once a month. We have routines to warm up my voice and provide my pitch. I sing my songs and then she tells me, "I'm just, try to breathe more." I didn't know that she was the vocal coach for Pinoy Dream Academy.

**Did guitar playing come naturally?**

I had fun learning the chords. I wanted to dance. Primarily na nung musician. I don't even consider myself a great guitar player. I just know how to play guitar. I know how to pull it off live.

MIGUEL Escueta: "It's music, all-out." KOKA KOYAS

**How would you describe your kind of music? Who were your biggest influences?**

I think it's an unconscious mix of the artists that I like. Sometimes I don't notice that parang may G-style ako and Lifehouse elements. But the genre, it's really alternative/melodic rock. Biggest influences: Coldplay and the Foo Fighters. Sometimes, I want to be Chris Martin, sabot I'm angry it's Dave Grohl.

**How would you describe your rapport with the band?**

Well, they have their own bands, but I think the most serious one is us. I'm signed as a solo artist, but parang band na rin kami gumalaw. Whenever I'm, are you ready sabi nila, I make music, it's with them. I start with chords, lyrics. But the growth of the song, I bring to them. It really grows, once you're in the studio.

**How was the "Camp Rock" song received?**

I think they showed the video in camp Adam, camp Jonas. So ngo-all-camp sila, "Siguraduhin ko kayo! Image ko natin 'to!" Okay naman, kasi mas strong kids who found out than I realize.

**Did you have closure of graduating when you were a kid?**

I didn't think I was going to be a recording artist. I was a basketball player. In my senior year of high school, I was captain of the team, and president of the student council. Music was just for fun talaga. My love for music just kept growing. Actually feel blessed to sing. I really love performing. I love being on stage.

**How different is your music now?**

The sweet stuff, people know how to sing it sounds like Boy Fighters. I've also been listening a lot to Our Lady Peace, the older albums. I was talking to the producer about the next album. We want "epic rock," something heavy enough that we can play in the underground bars, and still be melodic to be in a movie soundtrack.

**How do you feel about channeling this career?**

It really doesn't feel like a job because I enjoy it. And at the same time, in terms of "pang kin, nakakapera naman ako. The crazy thing about being in this industry is it isn't as stable as a corporate job. But so far, it's still good!

TAKE FIVE

# Think 'Best of Pinoy' class

NOW THAT THE PLANET HAS GONE truly "global," the qualitative term "world class" has become even more of a communication necessity to be minded for Filipinos. Thus, many of our finest talents in various fields try their best to make it abroad, especially in the West. Even those who remain in the Philippines do work that aspires to "world class" status.

That sounds good, even genius, because marking hard to meet international standards initially appears to be the way to go. In the Philippine context, however, there is also a made more complicated by our undying colonial insecurity.

This attitudinal fix that we got from our colonizers has made some of us believe that "local" is inferior to "imported," *kuwentuhan* is not as good as PAGE Pinoy is not as with it as Ambeth—down the line.

It's been more than 60 years since the last colonizers officially departed from our stilted shores, and yet they did their psychological and psychic con job so well that we're still reeling from its effects.

In a result, "world class" has acquired a warped meaning in our perception: "better class." Better than what? Pinoy class.

But, there's the psyche and pop-cultural rub. In aspiring to meet global standards, some local talents try their best to "look western" to get away from their Filipino-ness, and disdain the Pinoy audience.

A weird example of this is some Hollywood talents' penchant for announcing the "world premiere" of their presentation. Hello? Does the "world" even know that such a dazzling premiere is taking place? And, if a little corner of the "world" somehow learned about it, would it even care? Please dwell.

We wouldn't make such a big deal about this "world class" confusion if it didn't have such negative effects on the mentality and value of our creative works. Talents who disdain the local and pander to the international connoisseur lose their hold on and link to their Filipino essence, and this can't sense it for its inherent value. What happened to them talent, then?

That's why, before they even think of doing work that's "world class," we urge Filipino talents to first look into themselves, their being Filipino rather than "citizens of the world." And they should focus on woolwearning and verifying the aspirations of the Filipino audiences, first and last. Instead of thinking "world class," they should aspire to "Best of Pinoy class"—that really is the way to go.

While doing so, they should also crouch not beyond "beyond Manila" to Filipinos living in other parts of the country that are poorly served by our artists.

We promise you, there's nothing more artistically paradoxically satisfying than staging a live production that is technologically and conceptually enthused by the residents of a small town in Palawan. The "world" can take care of itself—this is best place to be.

**Viewfinder**

Antolin U. Jarme

### 'Witch Mountain'

For years, stories have circulated about a secret place in the middle of the Nevada desert that's known for unexplained phenomena and strange sightings. Called Witch Mountain, it's the setting for Dwayne Johnson's latest starrer. He plays a cab driver who finds two tween witch supernatural powers in his vehicle—and soon realizes that he's in the middle of an adventure he can't explain to the government, mobsters and even extraterrestrial industry to stop them!

### 'Single Ladies'

Last month, Sony Music, in cooperation with Robinsons Mall and 97.1 Hamburger LD, held special activities to celebrate Beyonce's hip-shaking new single, "Single Ladies."

Watch the Seabomb on GMA shows as they demonstrate the dance's moves. Discover new dance talents as "bit" hosts the Single Ladies Pinakbalasa Dance Contest. Also, catch the Seabomb when they guest at Robinsons Imus (March 7) and Robinsons Manila (March 8).

THE Jonas Brothers (from left) Nick Jonas, Joe Jonas and Kevin Jonas at the 2008 MTV Video Music Awards

# Tweens will swoon for Jonas Bros in 3D

LOS ANGELES—SOMEHOW, WE WON'T actually get a clear arc to what makes the Jonas brothers tick.

We may get a glimpse into the pop stars' distinct personalities—because certainly they must have them...and, eventually, even learn about their interests and interests.

But for now, Nick, Joe and Kevin are presented as as much glossy superficial packaging in "Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience."

Sure, there are behind-the-scenes moments wedged between the perky performances, but these moments feel self-conscious, staged, and remote mainly of the brothers marveling at how many screaming fans are gathered outside their hotel/car/whatever.

We learn nothing about who they are or where they came from—they may not even have parents, for all we know, since the adult accompanying them is usually their bodyguard.

### High-energy show

But then again, director Bruce Hendricks' film isn't intended for the curious soul. It's for the tween and teen girls who crammed our piercing blasts of glee at the very sight of the words "Joe Jonas" during the opening titles at the Los Angeles premiere. (And watching the movie with a crowd of crazy in-love devotees has a totally interactive "Rocky Horror" like quality about it. The girls chat and scream and sing along on cue.

**Review**

So if the brothers can bear them or something.)

To their credit, the Jonases put on a high-energy show—blah, blah, bounded-back handsprings!...and Hendricks, who also directed last year's 3D Miley Cyrus movie, has his cameras everywhere. Hands and glow sticks reach up from the dark mass of preadolescent humanity at New York's Madison Square Garden and we feel like we're among them—for better and for worse.

And it's hard to hate the Jonas Brothers completely since they seem like such hardworking, decent kids—except Kevin, that is. He's a grown-up. He has short hair and celebrates and, at 21, is old enough to buy the alcohol that he and his brothers would never dream of drinking. He also doesn't get the same hot youngster buzz as the same-sort-of-Jonases as Cyprus, to paraphrase Cyrus, their Joe Disney peculiar, he gets the most body models.

### Pretty gimmicky

Unfortunately, most of the 3-D e are pretty gimmicky. For example, the middle bracket takes off to sing Joe and Nick them at the camera. Sick, the youngest, flicks a guitar and hits us squarely between the There's also a bizarre sequence in they whip out giant poster boards suggestively spray the crowd) with aces of indeterminate. Fluffy white? Foam. Perhaps they're not so into after all.

As for the songs themselves ... they all start to blend into each other a while. They're about chasts hearing fun and they have just ea guitar to make them seem (though not theatrically) rockin.' Nobody Girl" has a little edge to it, and "Hill Grand" is just ea or catchy.

But mostly the movie upholds adage that if it's too loud, you're too Then again, if you're listening to this, you're probably too old anyway.

# My commitment to get physical

MANILA.—In LAST WEEK'S BACKSTORY, I mentioned early in the article that I signed up with a fitness center—or to short, the gym. I have made that commitment halfheartedly in the past, signing long-term contracts with a heart (and a gym bag) full of good intentions. However, after only a few sessions, my devotion stayed on the couch and my good intentions never left tangles.

Fast forward to early this year. I found myself back on the couch with my derriere mysteriously expanding. (Okay, not so mysteriously, but you get the point.) Following my husband's example and after observing his amazing progress since he began his regular sessions over a year ago, I swallowed all pride and denial, bit and I got into the car and headed to the gym.

The front desk lady took me on the grand tour. (But followed closely behind.) She introduced me to the manager, took me to the locker room (where I found one of my friends after her workout was over) and gave me a rundown of the different gyms I could sign up for. I chose the "I have dozen a week" package, plus 10 sessions with a personal trainer.

That same afternoon, my husband and I went into the nearby Pilates studio. One of his cousins is actually an instructor, and I've had many friends swear by it, saying that it makes one's body long and lean. Two friends are christened me signed up at this studio, and really love their sessions. So yeah, I signed up there, too.

### Feeling stronger

It's been two weeks since my journey began, and I'm starting to feel a change. I feel stronger and can do more repetitions of certain exercises. When I started one thing, for example, 25 shoulder presses. I can now do 35. Having said that, my trainer told me that I won't see significant results for another couple of months, so I'm trying to be patient.

I'm noticing improvements in the Pilates studio, too. At least my trainer seems to think so. She constantly challenges my fitness level, starting me gradually upward.

My entire body feels like a stretched rubber band after one hour's worth of stretching. I mean, horribly achey, in many, very good.

In the inspiration to keep me going when the going gets tough, I've found a few different things to help me out. Texting friends encouraging and teasing me is one way. Listening to music or watching a movie while I walk and run on the treadmill is another ... and creating a better glance in the direction of the cute, well-built gym members. Seeing how great they look is a wonderful motivator.

Oh, and this one last thought: sometimes for me, I don't have a choice.

Let's see how things go in a few months, shall we?

Following my husband's lead, I swallowed all pride and headed to the gym

CINEMA ACCESS: 395-5555

# MOVIEWORLD

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMA MOVIE GUIDE

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**GALLERIA**

1 WATCHMEN
2 JONAS BROTHERS
3 SHAOLIN GIRL
4 WATCHMEN
5 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
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7 THE INTERNATIONAL / PUSH
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**ERMITA**

1 WATCHMEN
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**METRO EAST**

1 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
2 WATCHMEN
3 THE INTERNATIONAL
4 WATCHMEN
5 HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU
6 PUSH
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8 STREETFIGHTER

**NOVALICHES**

1 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
2 WATCHMEN
3 STREETFIGHTER
4 BOOKING

**PIONEER**

1 STREETFIGHTER
2 WATCHMEN
3 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
4 SHAOLIN GIRL

**STA. ROSA**

1 THE INTERNATIONAL
2 YES MAN
3 MY BLOODY VALENTINE
4 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE

**LIPA**

1 CONFESSIONS of a SHOPAHOLIC
2 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
3 VALKYRIE
4 HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU

**DASMARIÑAS**

1 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
2 THE INTERNATIONAL
3 MY BLOODY VALENTINE
4 VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA

**IMUS**

1 HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU
2 THE INTERNATIONAL
3 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
4 VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA

**ANGELES**

1 THE INTERNATIONAL
2 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
3 MY BLOODY VALENTINE
4 DRAKULORING

**STARMILLS**

1 DRAKULORING
2 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
3 MY BLOODY VALENTINE
4 PUSH
5 VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA
6 THE INTERNATIONAL

**BACOLOD**

1 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
2 CONFESSIONS of a SHOPAHOLIC
3 MARLEY AND ME
4 THE ABANDONED
5 BOOKING
6 PUSH

**ILOILO**

1 CONFESSIONS of a SHOPAHOLIC
2 PUSH
3 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
4 UNDERWORLD 3
5 BOOKING
6 VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA

indieline
FEATURED FILM of the WEEK

## Another victory for Cesar

From page D1

Does she plan to settle down someday? "I'm heavily loyal," she said, blushing. "But regardless of gender, I also want to love and be loved for the right and real reasons." She unabashedly admits that her biggest crush is Richard Gomez.

What does he want to say to his domineer "Mag sa-loog sadin. Jigging pansin ang mga Kulang sa pansin. Negative vibes will just make us ugly."

Watching BB-girl excelled made us realize that her being true to herself is what makes her glow inside out, albeit its icy 600

### Students' choice

ABS-CBN dominated the 5th DZT Student's Choice Awards, spearheaded by the Office of the Secretary General of the University of Santo Tomas. The Kapamilya network bagged 16 out of the 23 awards. Some of the winners are: Aune Curtis, Best Actress for "Oyayi"; John Lloyd Cruz, Best Actor for "I Love Betty La Fea"; Sarah Geronimo, Most Popular Local Music Video Performer; Aga Muhlach's "That's My Doc," Best Movie; "Boy and Kris," Most Popular Talk Variety Program; "The Buzz," Most Popular Entertainment News Program; "NAP 'III'" for Most Popular Variety Program. With the Thomasians' recognition, rumors of the more-ong Kapamilyan network's popularity.

### Pageant hopeful

Bidi Asuncion made it to the final 24 out of 170 hopefuls in the Binibining Pilipinas pageant. She first joined a beauty contest when she was just 15, winning third runner-up for the Miss Central Visayas Regional Athletic Association in 2004.

"The charming fabulous has dropped her familiar screen name and is using her real name Richell Angeles in the pageant to make it a fair and square competition. The fourteenth princess has what it takes to turn into a beauty queen. Bidi's dream to be a title holder is now within her reach.

E-mail asuncionbidi@yahoo.com

## Judai...

From page D1

classic interview of me the ceremony on Monday. Naturally it's a university. That's why this award is special because it's given by students. Salamat-singalot."

It's also memorable because it's her first as "Hosting" and she is sharing it with actors legend Anita Linda (for "Adela"), she said.

Yet for that to Judai, there's also a hospital in the famed Tagalog verse, the University of Perpetual Help System Dalta.

She said the hope may have also been committed because she has been spending a lot of time in hospitals lately.

The actress plays a nurse in her latest ABS-CBN series "Habang May Buhay" that's why.

"We've finished a month's worth of episodes. Taping is going smoothly," she related.

### 'Maraurjo'

She originally envisioned the role, dubbed maraurjo, as a local version of "Grey's Anatomy."

"I know that would be difficult to do because of the technical requirements," she admitted. "But the show's story has become more meaningful because it also tackles a mother-daughter relationship."

Judai's mom's writing serves Gina Alajar plays Judai's mom.

"But it's still informative," she said of the new show "Sa, mga viewers is learn about health issues. We have characters and stories so sometimes because our goal is to make the same as realistic as possible."

Judai has learned a lot on the set, too. "It's like going to nursing school," she quipped. "I've also completed my training requirements from time doesn't a taping, nag papahalohan ako. I get inoculated!"

### Big day plans

Health-wise, it seems that she's all set to start a family with fiancé Ryan Agoncillo.

"Everyone thinks we are keeping details of our thirty-coming wedding a secret," she said. "Not really. It's just that it's very difficult to plan. We have a lot of things to do yet."

Are they having a wedding planner?

"We are also discussing that," she said. "We are still choosing the date. We are considering a long shot season."

So when is the big day?

"It can happen next week, it can happen next month. But it will definitely happen," she said.

Another certainty is that they've found their assigned home in the South.

"That's our priority now," she said. "We are living the house. Hindegaan nanah avalue (with swallow of a child-proof). For our daughter Sabas."

E-mail bayotasreyes@yahoo.com

GARFIELD

JL LIPIN

FUSAO BANDY

DICK TRACY

LOVEKNOTS

JAMES BOND

DIVINE COMEDY

BABY BLUES

ATOMO AND WEEDY

TUKBOK

KIKO MACHINE

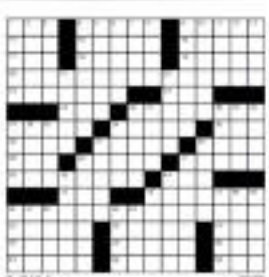
MEN

## DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 DKG. (It. time unit: Sign)
4 Philosophy of naked indecision
8 Pure Sellers
14 Bowers's impersonation
15 Wolfe's exquisite partner
16 Keep an eye on
17 Edward Gaston
18 Animal dens
19 Acrobat, sometimes
20 Start of a race
21 Pollutes
24 Condescension
25 John Hussey
26 Hatred
27 Trashed up
28 Was inattentive
30 Bible's Ark builder
34 Tonight
37 Part 2 of song
38 Bottoms line
39 Black jewels
40 Key work
41 Whitewater is in it
42 Dons Rivers portion
44 Potato bars
45 Psychic powers
46 Lotsa
47 Homemade
50 End of quip
52 Madame Curie
54 Italian wine
55 Concluding part
56 Public relations
59 "Les Girls" star
60 Of the ear
61 Mind: suffix
62 Dispatch segments
63 Afghan coat

DOWN
1 Actors
2 Certain passwords (2 wds.)
3 Barns use
4 Rivet
5 Cutting edges
6 Peppercorns
7 Boggy ground
8 Pidgin's refusal
9 Backward cash
10 Hotel bar
11 Pack away, as people
12 Rollicking party
13 Compassion-arousing case
22 Brought to a fine ___ (Perfect Play)
23 Lion noises
27 Alienates to the core
28 Just t know secure
29 Liquidizers
32 Bad items
33 Bookkeeper fix-it
35 Light fan
36 Turn out cute
38 Contemporary of Agatha
39 Florida bass
42 Bolivar's emancipation
43 Roll over
45 Ecosystem
47 Change dimensions
48 Loading device
49 Summer or Dundee
51 Bowling league's operation
52 Take care of
53 Rise to a throne
55 Lotta commotion
57 Germany, currency
58 Pre-Mar. 15 VAT

By Bill Clarke
Colorado, WY



Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

## HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

FOR BORN TODAY: Your ideas are original, creative, charming and comfortable in any social setting. However, you're also very private. In the same way, you can be logical and practical and yet have a strong sense of intuition. Your personality is a fascinating blend. You're a good leader and follower. You get along well in almost any situation. You excel in both of these areas. Famous people born on this day include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Alexander Hamilton, Frank Sinatra, singer Bonnie Raitt and actress Kristin Davis.

**ARIES** (March 21 to April 19): You'll be in many discussions and meetings today. Be sure to listen to others' opinions before you react to the facts—and feelings—that are being discussed or overheard about you or react to the future—and feelings—that are being discussed or overheard about you or react to the future—and feelings—that are being discussed or overheard about you or react to the future

# 'OPM legends' bring back the old times

SHOW TIME

NAIA CITY—THEY WERE THE biggest stars of their generation 30 years ago. Now in their 50s, singers Marcelo Zuñiga, Rey Velasa and their J. Peter have managed to prolong their careers by catering to an audience who sometimes old times through their classic pop hits.

Encouraged by their former record label boss, Vic del Rosario, the three artists have banded together with Claire de la Puente, Rico Rogelio and Joey Albert—all very popular female singers of their time—as an act billed as "Legends of OPM."

The group staged a successful concert last year at the PICC. A repeat of the show is set tonight at the same venue.

Zuñiga, a doctor by profession and one of the most popular pop balladeers of the '70s and '80s, said he and his contemporaries remain active by performing—occasionally to big venues, but more frequently in the provinces as well as Filipino communities in the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Zuñiga, whose father is from Bulan, Sorsogon, said he goes to the US every year to entertain Filipino expatriates.

Interviewed by the listeners in the Candice Watersports Complex at the Provincial Capitol Compound in Pili, Camarines Sur, Zuñiga said shows such as "Legends of OPM" are still alive among the older generation.

Zuñiga's signature songs like "Dyosa Lang," "Kumusta Ka" and "Never Say Goodbye" are still frequently sung in the documents of karaoke bars around the country.

Starting out as a folk singer in 1971, Zuñiga, who wears from a slate of singers, persevered in small clubs until he became one of the lead singers of the Barrio Birth Central Band which performed in Metro Manila's hotel circuit from '75-'80.

When Zuñiga went solo, he sought the guidance of the late Isorelio Ilanan, a music-voice professor of the University of the Philippines. This brought out his clear baritone voice that made him stand out from other solo performers of his time.

Zuñiga said he will not stop performing as long as his health allows it. "We will have the provincial audience and nostalgic Pinoys abroad to inquire us to continue singing our songs." Jun Encanedor, Inquirer Southern Luzon

HONEY Zuñiga

CHANCE Pempengco

### Final Eraserheads concert

It's all systems go for 'Eraserheads Live: The Final Set' on March 7 at the SM Mall of Asia concert grounds in Pasay City. Presented by MTV Philippines, the concert featuring the most popular and influential Filipino band of the '90s will reportedly be the last time that its members are playing together in the country. Call 915-5555 or 891-0999.

### Natalie Cole at the Big Dome

Multi-Grammy Award-winning artist Natalie Cole performs on March 11 at the Araneta Coliseum. The 30-year-old singer-songwriter made her debut recording at age 6 on the Christmas album of her father, legendary jazz pianist-singer Nat King Cole. She started performing at 11 and first won the Grammy as Best New Artist in 1975. Succeeding Grammy laurels came in '76, '91, '95, '96 and this year. Call 911-5555.

### Mitch Valdes at Captain's Bar

Mitch Valdes stars in "Mitch U," a show featuring comedy sketches and musical numbers tomorrow at the Captain's Bar of Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Makati. Call 751-0726.

### Chance at Shangri-La Plaza

Teenage Filipina singing sensation Chance Pempengco makes time off from recording her debut album in the US to perform on March 7, 7 p.m., at the Grand Atrium, Level 2 of the Shangri-La Plaza in Mandaluyong. The show, part of the mall's celebration of Women's Month, will have violinist Jay Cayuca as guest.

### 'Reseasoning' repeat

Carmen Soriano and Anthony Castelo will have a repeat of their "Reseasoning" show in March 7 at the Cupola's Bar of Manila's Oriental Hotel in Makati. Call 891-0888.

### Red Jumpsuit at Ayala Malls

Young Americans band Red Jumpsuit Apparatus visits the Philippines for a series of shows at the Ayala Malls starting tonight 10:30 p.m. Alabang Town Center, March 7 (6 p.m. Greenbelt); and March 8 (6 p.m. Trinoma).

### Sam Concepcion's band-raiser

Singer-dancer-actor Sam Concepcion will help raise funds for the Ann Clueless Learning Center in his concert dubbed "I'll Find You (Heart 2)" tonight at Greenmall 77, Mother Ignacia cor. Scout Reyes, Quezon City. Call 911-5555.

### Club party at Socialista

Ria Mendiola Club (Mandaluyong Station, Aseel Castillo, Ann Constantino, Cissy Payot, Marese Carbonell, Sevjay Angeles) and are hosted in Tokyo (Ann Shimizu) will

ANTHONY Castelo and Carmen Soriano

pool their talents together in a club party dubbed "In the Name of the House" on March 7, 8 p.m. at Socialista Bar, Bonifacio St., Makati.

### Award-winning musical at RCBC

Atlantis Productions opens its 10th anniversary season with the Tony Award-winning musical, "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" from March 20-April 4 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Makati. The production stars Carla Guevarra Laforteza, Bela Padilla, Richard Cetenty, Thea Rodrigo and Joel Trinidad. Bobby Garcia directs with choreography by Gari Arceo-Jacobs. Call 403-7650.

## Another victory for Cesar

I HAD A BLAST WITH MY FRIEND Cesar Montano at his iconic Bellstino. We had an impromptu victory party after we both won at the 9th Gawad Tanglaw. Sydney ones turned Best Game Show (Game for "Singing Bee" (which runs Best Game Show) while I bagged the Best Entertainment Columnist award for the second time around.

I am eternally grateful to the esteemed members of Gawad Tanglaw for the recognition. Bulwy is elated that he won. "Kakabalewa kasi' experimental lang na nag game show host ako," he said. "It's so absurd—so unexpected—you never here here."

The cool staff of his show and my "pet BF" Helen Cuidio joined the celebration. We were ribbing Bulwy about how funny he looked in his earlier films like "Golden Buddha" so he should host all TCD-copies of show movies. "Negative ako when it has gone me a TCD compilation of all my films," he said. "Sa bahay pinanood, mag-gap ka na rin (laughs). But I don't support piracy."

He showed me a video of a Makiling TV ad in the States which struck his attention drawing that extreme style. "I almost fell off my seat when I first saw this ad. Kaydle kid mag Pinoy na mag Tagalog at all."

CESAR Montano

DOLLY WOOD

*Dolly Anne Carvajal*

Bulwy also told me about a soft drink ad which he saw in India that blew him away. "Ending ng concept? A little boy couldn't reach the bottom of his beer drink in the vending machine so he pushed the button of the other drink until he had enough coin to step on and reach for his beer drink." A couple-after endorses like Bulwy ought to direct a TV ad soon since he really has an eye for detail.

He was on his fifth day of antibiotic for his tonsils as Bulwy and I savored our drink wine yet. But after much prodding, he gave in and proposed a toast for more successful lasting friendship.

We are planning to go to his hometown Bulwi on Holy Week and continue the cultural program for her fantastic Ilds in various towns of the province which he started with his wife Beverly. The highlight of the night was when we took turns in asking Bulwy "tough 10" questions. His revealing answers made us all scream with delight.

Unfortunately, it's all all the sweet. I went home feeling happy inside. Not only do I have a Best Columnist award but also the best guy friend in Bulwy. The more I know him, the better I feel!

### Cover girl

It was an hour-morning in finally meet Mr Cunningham at her autograph signing at a magazine John's the Manila cover girl's. She looks even more stunning in person.

During my installment romance with Robin Padilla many heartaches ago, Mr's "Tomorrow will," Tuesday Padilla, was always kind to me. When RR gave me a right hug and told me, "It's so nice to see you again," I knew that she somehow remembers that many episode in my life. I replied, "Good to see you, too, now as a different time and dimension."